

Великая Отечественная: Непознанная война

**Марк Солонин**

**22 ИЮНЯ,**

**или Когда началась  
Великая Отечественная война?**

«... Марк Солонин совершил научный подвиг, и то, что он делает, — это золотой картон и фундамент той истории войны, которая когда-то будет написана...»

Виктор Суворов

## Abstract

The sensational and scandalous book by Mark Solonin takes a fresh look at the initial period of the war between Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union. Based on data extracted from previously classified documents and materials, as well as an analysis of scientific, historical and memoir literature, the author refutes the already established and new myths about the causes of the catastrophic defeats of the Red Army in the first months of the war, gives an objective, deeply reasoned interpretation of the course of military events. Primary attention is paid to the influence of the "human factor". The book is intended for historians and anyone interested in World War II.

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- Brest Fortress Lady
  - with Ficus Part
  - 3 "I
    - love our plans in abundance..." "Your
    - last hour is coming, bourgeois..." "The
    - armor is strong, and our tanks are fast..."
    - About what was not
    - Military Council
    - 23— June 25, 1941
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    - man without a gun So
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    - years in
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    - you, fools, will
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  - is very
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**Mark Solonin**  
**June 22,**  
**or**  
**When did WWII start?**

*Dedicated to my father, Semyon Markovich  
Solonin, a private in the Great War*

## To the reader

"Truth does not win. The truth remains when everything else is already wasted."

With these words, the program document of the Czech opposition "Two Thousand Words" ended. Then, in June 1968, hardly anyone could have imagined that this phrase would accurately describe the situation that has developed today in the vast expanses of the former Soviet empire. It took the

author of the book that you are holding in your hands 15 years and 138 thousand words to find and describe a small piece of historical truth - the main events of the book do not go beyond the time frame of two weeks in the summer of 1941. Now, when the book comes out for a meeting with the Russian reader, I want to express my deep gratitude to those people who, with kind words, friendly support, and constructive criticism, helped me in this work.

First of all, the chief bibliographer of the Samara Regional Scientific Library A.N. Zavalny, leading researcher at IMEMO K.L. Maidanik, secretary of the Moscow branch of the Society of Russian Historians L.A. Naumov, Associate Professor of the Department of Philosophy of SamSTU A.S. Stepanov. A

huge role in writing this book was played by unique documents and materials introduced into scientific circulation by the Internet sites of the Red Army Mechanized Corps ([mechcorps.rkka.ru](http://mechcorps.rkka.ru)), Russian Air Force ([airforce.ru](http://airforce.ru)), "Workers' and Peasants' Red Army" ([rkka.ru](http://rkka.ru)), "The Russian Battlefield" ([battlefield.ru](http://battlefield.ru)), the presenters and compilers of which the author expresses his special gratitude. An important step in the

work was the publication of the first chapters of the book by the Volzhskaya Kommuna newspaper, for which the author expresses his deep gratitude to its editor-in-chief V.Ya. Naganov. Finally, I

consider it necessary to thank you, dear reader. No matter how much I and my colleagues in the field of historians and writers are proud of our "tripod", no matter how we threaten to "not cherish the love of the people" - the theater does not live without spectators, the book does not exist without readers. This is all the more true when it comes to a book that is by no means for "easy reading". It has no easy and short answers.

to those most difficult questions that generations of researchers still have to work on, and every reader who has the courage and patience to read these 138 thousand words should rightfully be considered a co-worker of the author. Only through our joint efforts will the tragic truth about Soviet history remain. Even if everything else is wasted. Samara, Russia, December 2004



## FOREWORD

*When an epoch is buried,  
The grave psalm does not sound,  
Nettles, thistles Have to  
decorate it... And then it  
floats up, Like a corpse on  
a spring river - But the son does  
not recognize his mother,  
And the grandson turns away in anguish...*

*"In the fortieth year", Anna Akhmatova*

### How did this book come about?

I am for a moratorium. Honestly. And if such a decision had been made at the state level, I would have obeyed it in the most conscientious manner. In fact, what prevented the adoption

of a common, binding decision for all: to ban any public discussion of the history of the Great Patriotic War. For a hundred years. Until 2045.

No books, no articles. In the school textbook - a brief notice that the country has a moratorium. And only when the memories of this Apocalypse that took place cease to be a bleeding wound in the heart of the people, when the last veterans leave, when the ashes of unknown soldiers become, as the song says, "just earth and grass," then we declassify ALL archives for ALL who wish work and work in them. Together we create a true, documented history of the Great War. The original documents of the war were classified and guarded behind seven castles as especially important secrets of the state. Even newspapers, the central

Soviet newspapers of the pre-war and war times, were withdrawn from the open collections of public libraries. The speeches of Molotov and Stalin, the texts of interstate treaties concluded



Soviet Union in 1939-1941 is a mystery. Terrible military secret. For half a century, a carefully

organized vacuum of reliable information was filled with standard texts, like nesting dolls, in which the same, directive established myths were carefully rewritten. Military history as an exact science of facts and documents was practically replaced by propaganda incantations. It came to such oddities as the performance by the same nomenklatura dignitary of the duties of head of the Special Propaganda Department (ie the main deceiver) of the Main Political Directorate of the Soviet Army and ... the Institute of Military History!

The most important question, on the "clarification" of which a narrow group of people boundlessly devoted to the party worked, was the question of why in the very first weeks of the war the Red Army was crushed, defeated and for the most part taken prisoner? Why did the Wehrmacht manage to reach the lakes of Karelia, the Kalmyk steppes, and the Caucasus Mountains? Why did the fire of war reach such places where foreign invaders had not been seen since the time of the "great turmoil" of the 17th century? How did it happen that most of all the victims, all the blood and sweat of the war left only to return by the autumn of 1944 what was lost in the

first few weeks of the retreat? Comrade Stalin himself was the first to point out the reasons for the "temporary failures" of the Red Army. In his famous radio address to "brothers and sisters" on July 3, 1941, and then, in a more detailed form, in a report at a solemn meeting on the occasion of the 24th anniversary of the October Revolution, Stalin named three

factors that allegedly determined the success of the Wehrmacht: - German the army was mobilized in advance and moved to the borders of the USSR, while the Soviet Union, which maintained strict neutrality, lived an ordin

- our tanks and planes are better than German ones, but we still have them very little, much less than that of the enemy;

- for every step deep into Soviet territory, the Wehrmacht paid with gigantic irreparable losses. Specifically, Stalin called the figure of 4.5 million killed and wounded Germans.

Two weeks later, the Soviet Information Bureau allowed itself to challenge the statement of Comrade Stalin himself - an unprecedented case in the history of this department. It was stated that the losses of the Wehrmacht by mid-November 1941 amounted

to 6 million people. Let's give Comrade Stalin his due. He lied, but he lied wisely. From his deliberately false fabrications loomed the image of a country peaceful, but with great potential. Yes, today we have few tanks - tomorrow there will be many, we were not the first to start mobilization - but now we will gather everything for the front and for victory. Germany, on the other hand, cannot afford to lose six million soldiers every six months, which means that in the very near future, "in six months or a year it will collapse under the weight of its crimes." It was precisely this perspective that Stalin outlined when speaking from the podium of the Mausoleum at the parade on November 7, 1941. And from the point of view of military propaganda (which has no right to be truthful), he said what should have been

said to people going into battle. After the war and after the victory, Soviet "historians" were given the task of strengthening the lie, but at the same time making it a little more believable. Not an easy task, but they did it.

The fact that the Wehrmacht lost 4.5 (or even 6) million at the beginning of the war was forgotten, silenced and never remembered again. The logic is very simple - by that time the German archives had been opened, the materials, in particular, about the losses of personnel, were published, and to continue to lie in this way meant to expose

oneself to the ridicule of the whole world. In order to "compensate", the picture of the defenselessness of the Soviet Union was strengthened by the statement that the main part of the tanks and aircraft that were in service with the Red Army at the beginning of the war was hopelessly outdated trash, "beyond any comparison" with enemy equipment. The thesis about the "sudden attack" was also much more persistently and loudly presented (Stalin tried not to stick out the topic of the notorious "surprise" especially, focusing on the word "treacherous", and these are two big differences. The thesis about "treachery" characterizes Hitler as a criminal, the "surprise attack" thesis exposes Stalin as a blind, naive fool).

Nikita Khrushchev, having come to power, also slightly modified the history of the beginning of the war. He presented Stalin as a stubborn fool - Richard Sorge and Winston Churchill sent him their famous "warnings", and he did not want to listen to anyone. Thus, by the end of the 50s, the version was finally formed, which in subsequent decades was hammered into the mass consciousness with the perseverance and inflexibility of a steam hammer:

firstly, we are peaceful people, we did not prepare for war, our government fought for world peace and tried to prevent the USSR from being drawn into the war;

secondly, "history gave us little time", so we didn't have time to do anything (tanks, guns, planes, even rifles in the right amount), and our army entered the war almost unarmed (the Molotov cocktail played a key role here, even those who do not know anything about the history of the war know about this bottle);

thirdly, Stalin did not allow the army to be brought into a state of some kind of special "readiness for war", and therefore German bombs fell on "peacefully sleeping Soviet airfields." From this trinomial (which was sung in every way in all books - from a school textbook to thick monographs), the answer to the question of

culprits of a terrible catastrophe. The culprits turned out to be: - a story that "let us have little time"; - Hitler, who for two months did not warn Stalin about his intentions;

- and, finally, excessive naivety and gullibility in general positive comrade Stalin.

In this scheme, only one role was left for the native Communist Party - the role of the organizer and inspirer of all our victories. Everything is clear, simple, logical. Any attempt

to doubt the authenticity of these myths was regarded as ranging from "cynical mockery of the memory of the dead" to "a new sortie of literary Vlasovites." I confess that I myself believed in all this. Class commercials up to the eighth. Then some vague doubts began

to appear. Over the years, they have only gotten stronger.

In fact, under Comrade Stalin, the entire Soviet people worked. All men worked. Almost all women worked. Maternity leave was given for four months: two before and two after. Then - from the infant to the machine. Teenagers - "fazeushniki" also worked. The country worked from early morning ("the morning meets us with coolness") until late at night. Well, military factories already long before the war worked in three shifts, from morning to morning. And, mind you, none of the hundreds of millions of employees worked as a merchandiser, speechwriter, image maker, trader, broker, dealer, schmiler... Everyone specifically plowed. Where did the product go? How could we have fewer aircraft tanks than in Germany?

What, then, did these factories smoking around the clock - a chintz for Komsomol members? Refrigerators and juicers for communal kitchens? Low labor productivity? Do not rush, do not rush, dear reader, with such suspicions. Let's first hear the opinion of knowledgeable people.

In 1936, Louis Charles Breguet, the head of the largest French aircraft manufacturing company (which, together with the Dasso firm, produces jet Mirages to this day, was able to visit the USSR aircraft factories). In a report on his trip to the USSR, he wrote: "Using the labor of ten times more workers than France, the Soviet aviation industry produces 20 times more aircraft." In April 1941, the German Air Force Attache G. Aschenbrenner with a group of ten engineers visited the main aviation enterprises of the USSR (TsAGI, Moscow plants No. 1, 22, 24, Rybinsk and Perm engine plants). In a report presented to Göring, Aschenbrenner wrote:

"Each of these factories was a giant enterprise, where up to 30 thousand people worked in each of the three shifts, the work was perfectly organized, everything was thought out to the smallest detail, the equipment was modern and in good condition ..."

And in Germany there were then two and a half times fewer people than in the USSR. The German Frau stayed at home and raised Kinders. The grown-up kinders sang Nazi marches and walked in formation, pulling off their socks, not after work, but instead of work. In the second year

World War II aircraft factories in Germany worked in one shift! Aluminum, which was scarce in the war, was spent on the production of garden houses and ladders for picking pears. The production capacities of German factories were loaded with the production of gramophones and bicycles, radios and cars, Fildepers stockings and razor blades. Serial production of the first battle tanks, aircraft, and submarines began only in 1935-1936. - less than one five-year period before the start of the world war.

So when did the Germans manage to create that notorious "multiple superiority in tanks and aircraft"? And from what they could create it?

Germany does not have its own bauxites, its own nickel, manganese, tungsten, copper, rubber, oil ... There was not enough simple coal and iron ore, the Germans had to transport iron ore by sea from Sweden throughout the war. Under Allied bombs. And Stalin had the entire periodic table under his feet, including stainless gold, for which everything was bought in France, in America, in the same Germany: the latest equipment - entire factories, the latest aircraft engines, the best transport aircraft in the world, the best minds and secret drawings. And

all this was not enough to arm the Red Army at least no worse than the newborn Wehrmacht? The author was

distracted from thinking about these questions for several years by his studies at the aviation institute, then by the design of a laser gun in a "mailbox", then by work in a coal stoker and the social struggle of the era of glasnost and a turning point.

What they fought for is what they got. Yes, much less than we would like, but nevertheless, in the early 90s, a large number of documents from the eve and the beginning of the war were introduced into scientific circulation, and previously classified works of Soviet military historians were published in the open press. In addition, the new times of openness, freedom of the press and the Internet have made available to the independent researcher the richest deposits of works by German historians and memoirists. And although to this day huge layers of documentary material are still hidden from the people (and without any decent explanation), what is already open is quite enough,

in order to assess in detail and accurately the balance of forces of the parties as of June

22, 1941. Yes, of course, there was no trace of any "technical superiority of the Wehrmacht". A cannon of the First World War model was dragged by six horses, the main means of transportation for the Wehrmacht infantry was one pair of legs for each soldier, and this soldier was armed with the most ordinary rifle (this is only in bad Soviet cinema, all Germans in 1941 go with "Schmeisers", but according to the staffing table, even in the elite divisions of the Wehrmacht of the "first wave" there were 11,500 rifles

and only 486 machine guns). Of course, the extremely militarized Stalinist empire, which had been preparing for the Great War for many years with the utmost strain of all the resources of the richest country in the world, armed and equipped its army in the best possible way. Of course, there were more tanks and aircraft, anti-aircraft guns and caterpillar tractors, airfields and balloons in the Red Army than in the armies of England,

France and Germany. Of course, the scientific and technical level of Soviet military production did not just "meet the best world standards", but shaped them in a number of areas. The world's best high-altitude fighter-interceptor (MiG-3), the world's best aircraft guns (VYA-23), the world's best tanks (light BT-7M, medium T-34, heavy KB), the world's first multiple rocket launchers (BM-13, "Katyusha"), the latest artillery systems, radars, rotary cluster bombs, flamethrower tanks and so on, so on, so on - all this existed, and not in drawings, not in experimental samples, but was launched into a large series.

Of course, the concentration of a three-million-strong Wehrmacht group near the western borders of the USSR was revealed by Soviet intelligence, moreover, it was revealed to the nearest regiment and echelon. And although there were never any original documents revealing the operational plans of the German command on Stalin's desk, the general military-political readiness of Hitler's Germany for aggression in the east was no secret either for the top state leadership of the USSR or for the senior commanders

of the Red Army. Available documents provide irrefutable evidence that covert mobilization and strategic deployment

The Armed Forces of the Soviet Union began BEFORE, and not after the first gun salvos on the border. As for the purpose of this deployment, a discussion is possible (and necessary). The last pre-war plans to cover the mobilization and deployment of the troops of the western districts were published only half a century after they were adopted. But after all, troops are concentrated and deployed for something, for carrying out some operations, and not just in order to create unnecessary problems with the need to cover them. Accordingly, the cover plans were just a part of a certain, secret to this day, Big Plan.

Whatever it was, the Red Army was preparing for war, and for such a war, which was to begin in the coming weeks or even days. The most that the Germans could achieve in such a situation was a very limited in time and space effect of tactical surprise. And no more.

### **Where do we start**

As it often (or always?) happens in the history of science, new knowledge, having solved old questions, has raised new, much more complex ones. After it became impossible to hide behind a screen of deliberately false fabrications about the "multiple numerical superiority of the Wehrmacht", the discussion of the real causes of the unprecedented military catastrophe in history became even more relevant and even more difficult.

Strictly speaking, this discussion began many years before the final collapse of the CPSU.

We are not so "lazy and incurious" (Pushkin) that among the hundreds of thousands of living witnesses of the dramatic events of those years, there are no people who are ready to doubt the authenticity of semi-official nonsense. Already during the Khrushchev "thaw", some figures, facts, documents fluttered into the light of day from the impenetrable darkness of military secrets, after the publication of which it became completely indecent to continue the previous lies. It is impossible not to mention, for example, Dashichev's two-volume monograph "The Bankruptcy of the Strategy of German Fascism." Although it was all devoted to German history and the author prudently avoided any comparisons,



having the eyes and brains of a reader, the last doubts about the "multiple superiority of the Wehrmacht in tanks and aviation" disappeared.

Nekrich and Grigorenko went even further. With a huge number of reservations, apologies and excuses, they nevertheless wrote in black on white paper that the Wehrmacht had no numerical or technical superiority over the Red Army. For one of them, this ended with expulsion from the USSR, for the other - with imprisonment in a special psychiatric hospital of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In the era

of "new thinking", their work was continued (most likely without suspecting it) by Viktor Suvorov. With his rare gift of a publicist, with the furious assertiveness of a man who finally found the only truth, V. Suvorov in his trilogy (Icebreaker, M Day, The Last Republic) left no stone unturned from the false myth about a quiet, peaceful and almost unarmed Stalinist empire.

Alas. Having destroyed the old myths, V. Suvorov hastened to replace them with a new one. It turns out that the Red Army was great and powerful - but only until three in the morning on June 22, 1941. The next day it was already bled and disarmed by a surprise attack by the Nazis. From the pages of Suvorov's trilogy, the solemn song of the First Disarming Strike simply flows:

"... in a sudden attack, Soviet tankers were shot down even before they reached their tanks, and the tanks were burned or captured without crews ... A sudden attack on airfields blinds tank divisions ... Soviet reconnaissance aircraft cannot take to the skies. .. Our Cyclops had an eye knocked out. Our cyclops is blind. He swings his steel fists and roars in impotent rage..." And so on.

For greater persuasiveness, Suvorov also offered his own, much more plausible version of explaining the reason for such embarrassment - the Red Army itself was preparing for an attack and, allegedly, therefore, forgot all caution. Compared with the mockingly stupid version of the communist "historians" (about how timid and naive Stalin was afraid to give Hitler a "reason for invasion") Suvorov's hypothesis looks very solid.

In parentheses, we note that V. Suvorov was not the first in this version of myth-making either. The same Grigorenko, back in 1967, wrote about how the "stupid" People's Commissar for Defense Timoshenko obeyed the even more "stupid" Stalin and moved all the artillery to the west on the afternoon of June 22.

They would have to wait until dark - and they took her out of the camps and shelters during the day. It was here that enemy aircraft flew at her. And destroyed. All. All sixty thousand guns and mortars. Each German bomber (and there were nine hundred of them on the entire Eastern Front), rushing over the earth like a mythical Valkyrie from the ancient Scandinavian sagas, destroyed one Soviet artillery regiment at a time. Cool...

Further, in Part 2, we will examine in detail, with a pencil in hand, the question of what the German aviation could, did and could not do. For now, let's turn to simple common sense and ask him a couple of simple questions.

Why do the "Hitler falcons" themselves know nothing about their greatest accomplishment?

Mountains of books have been written on the history of the Luftwaffe. There are monographs devoted to the combat use of certain types of aircraft, there are monographic studies of the combat path of almost every aviation squadron, and all this with German meticulousness, with an exact indication of the serial number of each aircraft and the military ranks of all crew members. But about how on June 22, 1941 they "disarmed" the entire Red Army - not a word. And even the deceitful Dr. Goebbels did not say anything

about this to anyone! On the other hand, why didn't our "falcons" do anything of the sort? No, of course, we are not talking about June 1941. At that time, we didn't have planes, but "hopelessly outdated coffins", and pilots "with a flight time of 6 hours in a box". But in 1943, 44, 45, when the number of Soviet air regiments approached a thousand, when we won absolute air supremacy, why then the Wehrmacht was not disarmed, left without tanks, without artillery, without warehouses in one day with

one mighty air strike? And why is there nothing like this in the history of the British Air Force? Both French and American? The Americans have been bombing Germany (the territory of which is smaller than the territory of our pre-war Western or Kyiv military districts) since the spring of 1943. The Americans dropped several kilotons of bombs on one object in one raid. On the day of the landing in Normandy (June 6, 1944), each Allied division was supported on average (according to the estimates of the famous American historian Taylor) 260 c

more than accounted for by one Wehrmacht division on June 22, 1941. And what - even ten months later, in the spring of 1945, the Wehrmacht was still fighting, and it was by no means fighting with bottles of kerosene ...

But seriously, it's stupid to have a discussion about this. Every high school graduate should know that a system of nine equations with ten unknowns can not be solved with a clear conscience. She just doesn't have a solution. It was absolutely impossible to

destroy (or at least significantly weaken) with one preemptive strike an army that by the beginning of the war had 198 rifle, 13 cavalry, 61 tank, 31 motorized divisions, 16 airborne and 10 anti-tank brigades, in the pre-nuclear era. And even with the weapons of the 21st century, to solve such a problem (taking into account the dispersal of the Soviet military potential in a giant theater of operations) a huge concentration of nuclear missile forces would be required. In reality, the main means of destruction that the Wehrmacht had in the summer of 1941 was artillery. Main calibers: 75,

105, 150, 210 mm. The maximum firing range is from 10 to 20 kilometers. It is these figures that determine the possible depth of the first impact in principle. Nine-tenths of the Soviet regiments and divisions were on the morning of June 22 outside this zone, 50-500-1500 km from the border, and therefore could not be destroyed even theoretically on the first, second, or third day of the war. It is worth noting that even the possessed Fuhrer did not demand such super-efficiency from his army. The planned duration of the "blitzkrieg" in Russia was still measured in months, not days, and it was supposed to defeat the Red Army by "bold advance of tank wedges", and not at all by one dashing raid by "Junkers-owls".

Nevertheless, Suvorov's concept fit very well into the "matrix" that had already been formed in the minds of his readers by many years of communist propaganda. Yes, for all the external incompatibility,

both the version of Suvorov and the version of Khrushchev-Stalin are united in the main thing: THEY ARE LOOKING FOR THE CAUSE OF THE MILITARY DISASTER AMONG TANKS AND AIRCRAFT, while diligently bypassing everything related to the actions (or inaction) of tankers, artillerymen, pilots, machine gunners and their commanders.

It is difficult to say whether the "false trail" on which Viktor Suvorov sent crowds of his followers was the result of a conscientious error, or whether we are still dealing with a deliberate literary hoax. Be that as it may, but in recent years in the historical literature, both Suvorov legends have received the widest circulation: both about the "first disarming strike of the Wehrmacht", and that the defeat of the Red Army was due to the fact that the troops that were trained, armed and were preparing for offensive operations, June 22, 1941 were forced to go on the defensive. Numerous "Suvorovites" have already managed to build a whole

theory that an army ready to attack and an army capable of successfully defending are two different armies, that there are, it turns out, some kind of special "offensive" tanks and aircraft, and that only in Due to the uniquely offensive nature of its plans and weapons, the Red Army was unable to conduct a strategic defense. The absurdity (if not deliberate anecdotal) of the theory about an Army That Can Only Advance

is obvious enough and does not in itself require a multi-page refutation. It is not at all necessary to graduate from the General Staff Academy in order to understand that an offensive is a much more complex type of combat action than a defense. Difficult precisely because the offensive makes higher demands on the control and communications system, which in this case require a flexible, quick, unconventional response to a dynamically developing situation. It is just as impossible to imagine a command capable of organizing a successful, swift offensive, but at the same time not being able to organize

positional defense on its own territory, familiar to every path, just as it is impossible to find a virtuoso jazz pianist who cannot play the "dog waltz" from the notes .

Finally, the so-called "offensive" army, armed with the best "offensive" tanks in the world, can always use the very method of defense that has been considered the best in all ages - to go on the counteroffensive itself.

We will find many examples of this in history, but the most striking, in our opinion, is the experience of the Israel Defense Forces.

This army never even tried to become suicidal under the geographical conditions of Israel (the minimum width of the territory within the boundaries of the UN resolution of 1947 is 18 km) positional defense. Both in 1967 and in 1973, the strategic task of defending the country from the many times superior enemy forces was solved by going over to the counteroffensive, and in October 1973 such a transition had to be carried out without any operational pause, immediately after attempts to contain the Egyptian offensive armies at the turn of the Suez Canal were unsuccessful. Did the Red Army try to act in the summer of 1941 in a similar way? Definitely - YES.

Even the official historical science is already ready to admit that "the fascist

blitzkrieg strategy

was opposed not by defense, including maneuvering, with the widespread use of sudden and well-prepared counterattacks, but, in essence, by the strategy of lightning-fast defeat of the invading enemy" [3].

As always, V. Suvorov expressed the same idea vividly and figuratively: "The reaction of the Red Army to the German invasion is not the reaction of a hedgehog, which bristled with thorns, but the reaction of a huge crocodile, which, bleeding, is trying to attack." More precisely, you can't

say. In the North-Western direction, a series of counterattacks by the Red Army (near Shauliai, Daugavpils, Ostrov, Velikiye Luki, Staraya Russa) continued from the first days of the war until mid-August 1941. On the main, western strategic direction, on

the line Minsk - Smolensk - Moscow, repeated, practically non-stop attempts to launch a decisive counteroffensive continued all summer, until September 10, when finally the troops of the Western, Reserve and Bryansk fronts, by order of the Stavka, went over to the defensive. A detailed analysis of all these offensive operations is beyond the scope of this book.

On the other hand, the end result of these counterattacks should be known even to a conscientious schoolboy. Nothing but the loss of hundreds of personnel divisions, tens of thousands of tanks and aircraft, all these attempts to go on the offensive did not bring. The Red Army turned out to be incapable of an offensive, just as it turned out to be incapable of creating a stable positional defense on such powerful natural frontiers as the rivers Neman, Dnieper, Dniester, Southern But, Western Dvina. On this

statement, the entire discussion with the "Suvorovites", in principle, can be completed without even starting. Nevertheless, a painstaking and detailed analysis of the first counterattacks of the Red Army can lead us to important conclusions about the real reasons for its defeat. That is why the author decided to build the book on a thorough analysis of three offensive operations, and precisely those about which one can, without sinning against the truth, say that these were the most powerful and best equipped with military equipment and personnel of the Red Army counterattacks.

#### **There will be no sensations**

"The service of the Muses does not tolerate fuss." Moreover, military history does not tolerate fussy haste. The reader needs to be patient. There will be no quick answers to the most difficult questions. There will also be no "sensational documents" so popular in recent years, amazing "revelations" of former Stalinist lackeys and other tabloids.

Ahead of us are hundreds of pages of complex text, oversaturated with numbers, dates, numbers of divisions and calibers of tank guns. Time after time, we will stop before each "well-known", "for granted", statement that has become familiar, like trampled slippers, in order to find out - what is really hidden behind these established myths?

## Part 1

# THE LOST WAR

**Tuesday 17 June**

That year, June 17th fell on a Tuesday. A typical summer day. The headlines of the national newspapers breathed serenity, very close to boredom. An editorial in Izvestia entitled: "On collective farm consumer goods and local initiative." Next come the articles "Results of the implementation of the new loan" and "The trade union-Komsomol cross-country has begun." Some animation was found only on the last page. Where the passionate appeal of Glavkonserva was published: "Return empty glass jars and bottles!" Against the background of this peaceful grace, the headlines of the second page of the issue, dedicated to the events of foreign life, looked especially contrasting: "War in Europe", "War in Syria" (dear reader, do you remember who and with whom fought in Syria in June 1941?), "The War in Africa", "The Bombing of Cyprus and Gibraltar", "Military Activities of the United States". Every reader of Izvestiya could thus visually appreciate the fruits of the wise, invariably peaceful foreign policy of the Soviet Union. And only a few dozen people in the entire vast

country knew that the first of a large series of mighty Stalinist strikes planned for the summer of 1941 had already begun. On the very day of June 17, when the commander of the 1st mechanized corps, Major General Chernyavsky, received an order from the Chief of Staff of the Leningrad Military District, Major General Nikishev, to raise the 1st Panzer Division on alert. By the way, the author is not at all sure that he

correctly indicated the name of the headquarters, which on June 17, 1941 was led by Major General Nikishev. Was it still the headquarters of the Leningrad Military District, or was it already the headquarters of the Northern Front? The correct answer to this question is of great diagnostic value.

Fronts in the Soviet Union were never created in peacetime (the Far Eastern Front deployed since the late 30s can



serve only as an example of "the exception that proves the rule" - the border with Japanese-occupied China continuously flared up, now large, then small armed conflicts). The deployment of fronts near the western borders of the USSR always preceded the imminent start of hostilities. On September 11, 1939, on the basis of the Belarusian

and Kyiv special military districts, two fronts were formed - the Belarusian and Ukrainian. Six days later, the invasion of Poland began, ending at the end of September 1939 with the "reunification" of 51% of the territory of pre-war Poland with the Soviet Union. (Let's note in parentheses that between Poland and the USSR in 1932 a non-aggression pact was concluded, and from that moment on the Soviet Union never challenged the legitimacy and "justice" of Poland's eastern borders.)

The war ended - and on November 14, by order of the People's Commissar of Defense No. 0177, the fronts were again transformed into military districts with

the same names [1, p. 328]. On June 9, 1940, on the basis of the administration of the Kyiv district, the Southern Front was created, which included units and formations of both the Kyiv and Odessa districts. Nineteen days later, at 14:00 on June 28, the troops of the Southern Front crossed the border with Romania and by the end of the day on July 1, 1940, occupied all of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina. After that, on July 10, 1940, the Southern Front was disbanded [1, p. 218].

But Comrade Stalin first rated Finland much lower than Poland or Romania, so by the beginning of the first Soviet-Finnish war (November 30, 1939) he did not create fronts. Who among us hasn't been wrong? But as soon as it became clear that the "crushing blow to the Finnish booger" (this was the syllable used in the December 1, 1939 issue of the newspaper with the good name Pravda) was dragging on indefinitely, the mistake was quickly corrected. On January 7, 1940, the troops

operating on the Karelian Isthmus were united into the North-Western Front. After a three-week respite and a significant build-up of forces on February 1, 1940, the troops of the front launched a decisive offensive, culminating in the breakthrough of the Mannerheim Line and the assault on Vyborg. Then, after a peace treaty was signed in Moscow on March 12, the North-West

the front was disbanded (Order of the People's Commissar of Defense No. 0013 of March

26, 1940). It is known for certain that in the summer of 1941, three fronts - the North-Western, Western and South-Western - were deployed BEFORE the invasion of Hitler's troops into Soviet territory began, an invasion, the reality of which Comrade Stalin did not immediately believe even when it actually began. Already on

June 19, 1941, the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR, Marshal Timoshenko, ordered the withdrawal of the headquarters of these three fronts to field command posts by June 22-23 (respectively in Panevezys, Obus-Lesna station and Tarnopol), and the construction of the field command posts themselves began on Timoshenko's order dated May 27, 41 [2, p. 1

It is noteworthy that already on June 19 the concepts of "front" and "district" in these documents were clearly separated. So, in the cipher telegram that G.K. Zhukov sent on June 19, 1941 to the commander of the troops of the Southwestern Front, it was indicated:

"The People's Commissar of Defense ordered: by June 22, 1941, the department should go to Tarnopol, leaving the district department subordinate to you in Kiev ... Keep the separation and transfer of the front management in the strictest confidence ..." (highlighted

by the author). The text of this telegram was given in the most official work of domestic military historians: the monograph "1941 - Lessons and Conclusions", published in 1992 by the General Staff of the then Joint Armed Forces of the CIS [3]. However, back in the old Soviet times, in the book of memoirs of Marshal Baghramyan (before the war, deputy chief of staff of the Kiev district), which passed all types of censorship, it was reported that they left for the command post in Tarnopol on June 21, having orders to arrive at their destination by the morning of June 22 [BY]. It became possible to fully appreciate this

sensational information only after in 1996 the Military Historical Journal (the press organ of the Ministry of Defense) published previously top secret (with the signature stamp "Special Importance", made in two copies each) action plans for the troops of the western districts to cover the mobilization and operational deployment of the Red Army [VIZH, 1996, No. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6].

So, in these documents, the withdrawal of headquarters to the command posts in Panevezys, Obus-Lesna and Tarnopol was planned to be carried out on the M-3 day, i.e. on the third day of mobilization. From which it follows that V. Suvorov not only did not overestimate, but most likely underestimated the intentions and perseverance of Comrade Stalin. There are good reasons to assume that the full-scale operational deployment of the Red Army for the invasion of Europe actually began on June 19 or 20, 1941.

In the historical and memoir literature, there are many references to very remarkable events that occurred during these days.

On June 19, the aviation units of the Baltic Special Military District (PribOVO) received an order to switch to a state of high combat readiness and disperse aircraft over operational airfields [2, p. 175]. On June 18, the chief of staff of PribOVO, Lieutenant-General Klenov, gave the following order: "... parts of the air defense zone and air defense systems of military formations accept readiness No. 2 ... air defense units located in the camps, immediately return to their permanent deployment points ... readiness period - by 18:00 June 19" [VIZH, 1989, No. 5]. On June 19, the headquarters of the Air

Force of the Western Front, at the direction of the front commander, General of the Army D.G. Pavlov was separated from the headquarters of the Air Force of the Western Special Military District (ZapOVO) and sent from Minsk to the west, to the Slonim

region [4]. Rear Admiral A. G. Golovko, then commander of the Northern Fleet, writes in his book of memoirs "Together with the Fleet" that it was on June 19 that he received "a directive from the Main Naval Staff to prepare submarines for going to sea." On June 20, the

commander of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, Vice Admiral Tributs, reported that "parts of the fleet from 19.6.41 were put on alert according to plan No. 2" [VIZh, 1989, No. 5]. The only pity is that even in 1989, the Military Historical Journal did not give any explanation about what kind of "plan number 2" it was ... Colonel General P.P.

Poluboyarov, who before the war was the head of the armored department of the PribOVO troops, writes that "On June 16, 1941, the command of the 12th MK (mechanized corps) received a directive to bring formations into combat

readiness ... On June 18, the corps commander raised formations and units on combat alert and ordered them to be withdrawn to the planned areas. During June 19 and 20, this was

done ... On June 16, by order of the district headquarters, the 3rd MK was also put on alert, which concentrated in the indicated area at the same time "[VIZH, 1989, No. 5]. On

June 18, the commander of the 8th Army, Major General Sobennikov, received an order from the commander of the PribOVO troops on the withdrawal of army troops to the areas indicated by him to cover the state border. The next day, June 19, a directive from the PribOVO headquarters was issued, which, in particular, stated:

"...lay minefields according to the plan of defensive construction, paying attention to complete secrecy for the enemy..." [VIZH, 1989, No. 5].

By the way, about mines. Chief Soviet historian of the initial period of the war, academician, doctor and professor V.A. Anfilov in his last book sighs sadly:

"... we did not have the production of anti-tank mines. By June 22, in all border districts there were only (emphasized by me. - M.S.) 494 thousand anti-tank mines..." [40, p. 218] Concern for "complete secrecy for the

enemy" reached the point that even the head of the political propaganda department of PribOVO Comrade Ryabchiy ordered on the evening of June 21: "... do not give

written directives to political propaganda departments of corps and divisions, set tasks of political work orally through their representatives ..." [61]

Conspiracy, conspiracy, and once again conspiracy.... Could it really be impossible to entrust to paper such tasks as "to be ready to defend the peaceful creative labor of the Soviet people", "we don't want an inch of foreign land"? Major

General S. Iovlev (in those days - the commander of the heroic 64th Infantry Division) writes in his memoirs: "... parts of the 64th Infantry Division in the early summer of 1941 were in camps in Dorogobuzh ... In 1941, the commander of the Western Special Military District, General of the Army D. G. Pavlov, ordered the divisions of our corps to prepare for redeployment in full force.

Loading was required to begin on June 18. The destination station was not reported to us, only the military communications authorities knew about it ... "[VIZh,

1960, No. 9] Yes, of course, Soviet secrecy standards were very different from universal ones. But so that the commander of the division in the rank of general, like a convict in transit, does not know where he and the regiments entrusted to him are

being taken "in full strength" ?! Colonel Novichkov, who at the beginning of the war was the chief of staff of the 62nd Infantry Division of the 5th Army of the KOVO, reports that "parts of the division set out from the camp in Kivertsy (about 80 km from the border. - M.S.) and, having made two night crossings, by the morning of June 19 they entered the defense zone, however, they did not occupy the defensive line, but concentrated in the forests near it "[VIZH, 1989, No. 5].

All this is strange. Very strange. Why at night? The terrain in Volhynia is wooded and swampy, in the dark of the night it is easy to drown a cannon in a swamp, and to wet people to no avail. Yes, and the nights in June are the shortest, you won't go far in 5-6 hours. And why then were concrete pillboxes built on the new border, the people's money was buried in the ground for two years, if after reaching the border the 62nd division "did not occupy the defensive line", but for some reason hid in the forest?

There are rumors (multiplied by division in the paperwork of Soviet historians) that Stalin tried his best to "delay" Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union. So after all, in order to "pull off" better, it was necessary not to hide divisions in the forests, not to wander through the swamps on a dead night, but on a bright sunny June day to call photo correspondents of central newspapers to Kivertsy and order them to remove the marching columns, and even under such angle so that they appear in the pictures as a myriad army. And on the front page of the newspaper - under the general heading "Border at the castle." And when laying minefields, it would be necessary not to take care of "complete secrecy for the enemy", but that the very fact of mining on the same day became known to all German agents.

"When dealing with a dangerous enemy, you should probably show him, first of all, your readiness to fight back. If we had demonstrated our true power to Hitler, he might have refrained from war with the USSR at that moment," writes General of the Army S.P. Ivanov, a highly experienced staff officer,

one of the main domestic historians of the initial period of the war. Exactly as advised by a professional of such a high level, and it would be necessary to act. If Stalin was

thinking about how to "put off", and not about how not to frighten away ... Yes, many

strange events happened in those days when newspapers wrote about consumer goods and glass containers, but we will return to the question from which and began this chapter—when was the Northern Front formed? The date of

June 24, 1941, indicated in most books, is a clear misinformation. On the evening of June 22, People's Commissar of Defense Timoshenko and Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army Zhukov in the text of their well-known Directive No. 3 (we will return to the discussion of this most important document more than once) in paragraph 3-a set tasks for the "armies of the Northern Front" [5,

p. 353]. But they could not (and the highly experienced who prepared this directive staff officers Vatutin and Vasilevsky) give orders to an empty place!

The day before, on Saturday, June 21, at a meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, it was decided "to entrust Comrade Meretskov with the overall leadership of the Northern Front," and a decision was made to appoint Comrade Kuznetsov, Secretary of the

Leningrad City Committee, as a member of the Military Council of the Northern Front [6, p.

358]. The exact date and number of the document on the formation of the Northern Front is unknown to the author. In the same way, the author does not have documentary confirmation (except for the memoirs of the commander of the 1st tank division V.I. Baranov published back in 1987) of the most important circumstance that in the order that the commander of the 1st mechanized corps received on June 17,

were used the words "combat", "combat alert", etc. But it is known for certain how this order was carried out. In accordance with the order, the 1st Panzer Division was to be loaded into railway trains and sent to the area of the new deployment. And the division included: 370 tanks, 53 cannon armored vehicles, nearly a hundred guns and mortars (including the latest, at that time - the world's best 152-mm ML-20 howitzer guns weighing seven tons each), hundreds of tra

thousands of vehicles for various purposes. As well as thousands of people, hundreds of tons of fuel and ammunition [7, 8].

It is difficult to say how long such a large-scale work would take in our time. It must be assumed that it would have taken a week to draw up a "comprehensive loading plan" alone. But it is no coincidence that the 1st Panzer was already red banner, and on the chest of its new commander, a participant in the war in Spain and Finland, General V.I. Baranov - the Gold Star of the Hero of the Soviet Union shone. The commanders of the tank regiments of the division were also veterans of the battles in Spain and the Finnish war: Hero of the Soviet Union Colonel D.D. Pogodin and Major P.S. Zhitnev. Unbelievable, but true - on the night of June 19, the last echelons of the 1st Tank left the Berezki station (northwest of Pskov). The word "elite" was not in use in those days, but it is precisely the word that fits the description

of the 1st Panzer Division, and the entire 1st Mechanized Corps as a whole. The corps was formed in the summer of 1940 on the basis of tank brigades that distinguished themselves during the Finnish war: the 13th Red Banner, 20th Red Banner Heavy Tank Brigades. CM. Kirov and the 1st light tank. The corps administration was formed on the basis of the administration of the 20th Red Banner Tank Brigade - it was this formation that in February 1940 broke through the "Mannerheim Line" in its most terrible section - in the area of \u200b\u200b"height 65.5", paving the way for the advancing Soviet infantry through 45 ( forty-five) rows of mined barbed wire [8].

By decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in April 1940, the 20th Tank Brigade was awarded the Order of the Red Banner of Battle, 613 people received orders and medals, 21 tankers were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. Just as great were the merits of the 13th Red Banner Brigade, for the successful leadership of which brigade commander V.I. Baranov was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union on March 21, 1940 [8]. The unequivocally criminal and vile

nature of that war does not detract from the unique experience of breaking through a fortified defensive line in the most difficult natural conditions, which Soviet tankers acquired on the Karelian Isthmus. And there were quite a few of them (tankers) there - already by the beginning of hostilities



the grouping of Soviet troops consisted of 2289 tanks, and in the future this number continuously grew [1, p.

153]. A clear illustration of the rich combat experience of Soviet tankmen could serve as a picture of how the 1st Panzer left its permanent deployment in the village of Strugi Krasny near Pskov.

Colonel General I.M. Golushko (in those days a lieutenant who had just graduated from the Kiev Tank School) describes in his memoirs what he saw when he arrived at the former camp of the 1st Panzer Division:

"... except for the foreman, who introduced himself as the head of the tank fleet, there was no one else here ... The remaining tanks - 20 units of BT-5 and BT-7 - were considered to be mothballed. I examined them and only gasped: some without gearboxes, others without batteries, some had

machine guns removed ... When asked what all this meant, the foreman replied that the regiment, alerted (emphasis mine. - M.S), took everything that could be put on the move ... "[9]

This is what is called - in war as in war. According to the concepts of peacetime, twenty abandoned, dismantled tanks is a crime. But the command of the 1st mechanized corps already knew on June 17, 1941 that peacetime for him and for the divisions entrusted to him was over. And this means that it is necessary to break out of the close "trap" of the camp long explored by the enemy, without losing a single extra minute. And tear off all the faulty tanks like sticky for spare parts for those that will go into battle. For order and supervision, they left a brave foreman with them - and

forward! By the way, where is this "forward"? Where did the first tank division of the Red Army move on June 17, 1941, both in terms of number

and level of training? Even the rules of the strictest Soviet top secrecy could not hide from the fighters and commanders of the 1st TD the amazing fact that the sun rose on the right in the direction of the echelons, and set on the left. In other words, trains rushed anywhere but to the western border. The hills and copses of the Pskov region first gave way to a century-old pine forest, and then the forest began to thin out, increasingly torn apart by lakes, swamps, and even deserted rocky wastelands.

On the morning of June 22, the leading echelons clanged their brakes for the last time and froze. Ending station. The train doesn't move on. There is nowhere to go - the railroad ends in the polar tundra. Arrived: Alakurtti station of the Kirov railway. We are in Lapland, the country of Santa Claus.

260 kilometers to Murmansk, 60 kilometers to the Finnish border, one and a half thousand miles to the nearest point of the front of the war with Germany that began that day.

### **"Shaking the ground with the roar of tank columns..."**

"But the hour of liberation and reckoning is near! The Red Army is advancing, shaking the ground with the roar of tank columns, covering the sky with its wings. their planes..."

Immediately make a reservation - these words are the living classic of Soviet literature A.N. Tolstoy spoke at a completely different time and on a different occasion. On that day (September 18, 1939), an irrevocable "liberation" was approaching Eastern Poland with a clang and a roar. And in the early morning of June 23, 1941, huge multi-kilometer columns of tanks, artillery tracked tractors and vehicles of the 1st and 10th Mechanized Corps moved in a completely different direction. Here, perhaps, it is time to interrupt the presentation of the events of June 1941 in order to explain to the reader - what do these words

mean: "mechanized corps"?

World War II can pretty much be called a tank war. It was powerful, operationally independent tank formations that became the main tool in conducting large-scale offensive operations in that era. And as soon as we set about finding out the real offensive capabilities of the Red Army of the 1941 model, we can't do without getting to know the Soviet mechanized corps better. The mechanized corps of the Red Army had a single structure, approved for the last time in February 1941. Mechkorggus included:

- two armored divisions;
- one motorized division;

- a separate motorcycle regiment;
- Numerous special forces (a separate communications battalion, a separate motor-engineering battalion, a corps air squadron, etc.).

In turn,

each division had four regiments. The tank division had two tank regiments, a motorized rifle regiment and a mechanized howitzer artillery regiment (12 122 mm howitzers and 12 152 mm howitzers). The motorized division had two motorized

rifle regiments, a tank regiment equipped with light tanks, and a cannon artillery regiment. In addition, each division had its own communications battalion, reconnaissance battalion, pontoon bridge battalion, anti-aircraft artillery battalion, and numerous engineering services. The motorized division (in case of meeting with enemy tanks) also had its own separate anti-tank battalion (30 45 mm guns). As you can see, when developing just such a structure, the Soviet command sought to ensure that each division, and the whole as

a whole, had the maximum independence of the operational corps. The corps commander had to have his own tank ram in the hands -

four tank regiments of tank divisions, armed mainly with medium and heavy tanks, and his own artillery group - three artillery regiments on a mechanical (tractor) traction - capable of breaking into the enemy defenses in the breakthrough area, and its own mechanized "horse lava" - four motorized rifle regiments, a regiment of light tanks, a motorcycle regiment, and its own means of air defense, communications, reconnaissance. Even our own reconnaissance aviation - a corps air squadron, which was armed with 15 U-2 and R-5 aircraft (U-2, as you know, took off and landed in any forest glade, and it was basically impossible). Only V. Suvorov knows how to gouge out the eye of such a "cyclops" ... The armament of the mechanized corps was based on 1031 tanks. They were distributed as follows: in the state of a motorized division there should have been 264 light high-speed tanks BT-7, each of the two tank divisions was supposed to have 63 heavy KB tanks, 210 medium

T-34, 26 BT and 76 light (including flamethrower) T-26 tanks. A total of 375 tanks. In addition, the reconnaissance units of the corps were armed with 17 T37 and T38 amphibious tankettes.

In addition, the mechanized corps was also armed with such a type of armored vehicles (absent in the Wehrmacht) as wheeled cannon armored vehicles: 18 in a motorized division and 56 in each of the two tank divisions. These armored vehicles (BA-10) were armed with a 45-mm 20K cannon, i.e. in terms of armament power, they surpassed the German tanks PZ-I, PZ-II, PZ-38 (t), which accounted for a total of 56% of the fleet of Wehrmacht tank groups. In total (including BA-20 light machine guns) there were 268 armored vehicles in the mechanized corps. In February 1941, it was decided to form TWENTY-NINE such mechanized

corps, which meant the deployment of tank troops numbering thirty thousand tanks: twice as many as in the armies of Germany, England, Italy and the United States, together

taken.

At that time, the Wehrmacht was preparing to form FOUR tank groups for the invasion of the Soviet Union. The German tank group had neither a standard composition nor a specific regular number of tanks.

So, the weakest, the 4th Göpner Panzer Group, consisted of three tank (1st, 6th and 8th) and three motorized divisions, a total of 602 tanks. The largest,

2nd Panzer Group of Guderian included five tank (3rd, 4th, 10th, 17th, 18th), three motorized, one cavalry divisions and a separate motorized regiment "Grossdeutschland", armed with 994 tanks. In total, four tank groups on June 22, 1941 included

3266 tanks, i.e. an average of 817 tanks in each group [10, 11].

For the sake of truth, it should be noted that, inferior to the Soviet mechanized corps in the number of tanks, the Wehrmacht tank group significantly (2-3 times) surpassed it in terms of the number of personnel. So, with full staffing, Guderian's tank group. was supposed to have more than 110 thousand personnel, while the staffing of the Red Army mechanized corps was only 36,080

Human.

This apparent contradiction has a simple explanation. Preparing for war with the USSR, Hitler ordered to double the number of tank divisions, from 10 to 20. This was done by simple division, by reducing the number of tank regiments in a division from two to one. As a result, in a German tank division, there were two infantry regiments per tank regiment, and the bulk of this infantry moved not at all in armored transporters (as in the old Soviet cinema), but in various trophy trucks. The chief of staff of the ground forces of the Wehrmacht, Halder, in his famous diary notes (entry dated May 22, 1941) that Guderian has 240 different types of vehicles in the 17th TD [12]. How to maintain such a mobile vehicle museum in the field?

There were no tanks in the motorized division of the Wehrmacht. No one. G. G. Goth writes that the motorized divisions of his tank group were created on the basis of ordinary infantry divisions, and the vehicles were received "only in the last months before the start of the war, and the 18th division - a few days before entering

the concentration area" [13]. In fact, the Wehrmacht tank group was a large unit of motorized infantry, reinforced by several (from 3 to 5) tank regiments. Continuing the line of "zoological" comparisons, begun at the time by V. Suvorov, we can say that the Wehrmacht tank group was a powerful and heavy buffalo, and the mechanized corps of the Red Army was a flexible and

swift leopard. In wildlife, the outcome of a fight between four buffaloes and two dozen leopards would be a foregone conclusion. The high command of the Red Army, which made the most daring plans for the Great Campaign, did not doubt the

capabilities of its "leopards". "... Tank corps, supported by mass aviation, break into the enemy's defensive zone, break his anti-tank defense system, hit artillery along the way and go into the operational depth ... The use of mechanized corps concentrically will be especially effective when, with their crushing blow, these mechanized corps will reduce pincers for subsequent attack on the enemy... With such actions, we believe that a pair of tank corps in the direction of the main attack will have to deliver a devastating blow within a couple of hours and cover the entire tactical depth of the order of 30-35 km. This requires massive use of tanks and aircraft; and this at

new types of tanks is possible, "- thus, with a sense of legitimate pride, the head of the Main Armored Directorate of the Red Army, General of the Army Pavlov, reported at a well-known meeting of the senior command staff of the Red Army in December 1940.

"... The pace of the further offensive after overcoming the tactical depth will be faster and will reach 15 km per hour ... We believe that the depth of reaching 60 km behind enemy lines is not the limit. It is always necessary to keep in mind, due to acceleration and organization, immediately on the first day to overcome the second resistance zone and reach the entire operational

depth ... "[14] It was smooth on paper, but they forgot about the ravines ... Unfortunately, even Hitler, although he was considered a "possessed corporal", he was smart enough not to wait, but to attack himself. Attack before Stalin completes all his twenty-nine mechanized corps to the last nut. As a result, it was by no means the same mechanized corps that had to be fought as described above. It was not possible to fully equip all 29 mechanized corps to full strength by June 1941. This - as the clearest and most convincing proof of our "unpreparedness for war" - was always talked about by historians from the special propaganda department, forgetting to explain to readers what kind of war the "invariably peace-loving" Stalinist empire, which created an armored horde, was preparing for (but did not have time to prepare), the number of guns in which was supposed to exceed the number of sabers

in the army of Batu Khan. "We did not calculate the objective capabilities of our tank industry," the Grand Marshal of Victory bitterly complains in his memoirs, "to fully equip the mechanized corps, 16,600 tanks of only new types were required ... there was nowhere to take such a number of tanks in one year under almost any conditions" [15]. Well, how

could the former chief of the General Staff forget the program for the deployment of mechanized corps, approved by him on February 22, 1941? All mechanized

corps were divided into 19 "combat", 7 "reduced" and 4 "reduced second stage". In total, by the end of 1941, it was planned to have 18,804 tanks in the mechanized corps and two separate tank divisions, including 16,655 tanks in the "combat" mechanized corps [16, p. 677].

In other words, the average number of tanks (877) in 19 "combat" mechanized corps should have been equal to the average number of tanks in each of the 4

Wehrmacht tank groups. In terms of quantitative indicators, this program has been successfully implemented. By February 22, 1941, the mechanized corps included 14,684 tanks. The increase in the number of 4120 units planned by the end of the year was significantly less than the actual production, which amounted to 6590 tanks in 1941 (including 1358 KB and 3014 T-34)

[1, p. 598]. For comparison, we note that the Germans (who allegedly "worked all of Europe") in 1941 produced only 3094 tanks of all types, including 678 light Czech

PZ 38 (t). In the following year, 1942, the tank industry of the USSR already produced 24,718 tanks, including 2,553 heavy KB and 12,527 medium T-34s [1, p. 598]. Total: 3911 KB

and 15,541 T-34s in two years. Moreover, this volume of production was provided in such conditions that in February 1941 Zhukov and Stalin could only see in a nightmare: two of the most important enterprises (the world's largest tank factory No. 183 and the country's only manufacturer of tank diesel engines, plant No. bombs to transport from Kharkov to the Urals, and two huge Leningrad plants (No. 185 named after Kirov and No. 174 named after Voroshilov) were in the blockade ring. There are no reasonable grounds to doubt that, under normal conditions, Soviet industry, all the more, would be able to ensure by the end of 1942 (as planned) the full complement and re-equipment of all 29 mechanized corps with new tanks, which required "only" 3654 KB tanks to equip and 12,180 T-3 tanks.

Having finished with disputes and forecasts, let's move on to assessing what was in kind. By the beginning of hostilities, 20 mechanized corps deployed in five western border districts included 11,029 tanks [3]. More than two thousand tanks were part of three mechanized corps (5th, 7th, 21st) and a separate 57th TD, which in the first two weeks of the war were brought into battle near Shepetovka, Lepel and Daugavpils. Thus, Zhukov and others like him had to start a war, content with only a FOUR-TIME numerical superiority in tanks. This is if you consider it super modest, i.e. not taking into account the tanks that were in service



cavalry divisions and troops of internal districts. In total, as of June 1, 1941, the Red Army had 19,540 tanks (again, not counting the light amphibious T-37, T-38, T-40 and T-27 tankettes), not counting 3258 cannon armored vehicles [ 1, p. 601].

The available tanks were distributed among the mechanized corps extremely unevenly. There were corps (1st, 5th, 6th), almost completely equipped, there were corps (17th and 20th), which did not even have hundreds of tanks. The composition of the tank fleet was just as heterogeneous. In most of the mechanized corps, there were no new tanks (T-34, KB) at all, some (10, 19, 18th) were armed with extremely worn BT-2 and BT-5, produced in 1932-1934, or even light tankettes T-37 and T-38. And at the same time there were mechanized corps equipped with hundreds of the latest

tanks. At first glance, it is difficult to understand the internal logic of such a formation. At least, no connection between the serial number and the degree of staffing is found. So, the 9th mechanized corps of Rokossovsky, the formation of which began back in 1940, was armed with only 316 (according to other sources - 285) tanks, and deployed in the spring of 1941, the 22nd mechanized corps had already 712 tanks by the beginning of the war [3 ]. But one has only

to put on the map of the border regions of the USSR the places of deployment of mechanized corps, as the plan of the upcoming "Thunderstorm" will be revealed to us in all its splendor.

The seven most powerful mechanized corps of the Red Army, superior in number and (or) quality of tanks to any tank group of the Wehrmacht, were located on the eve of the war in the following very logical

way. The main blow was to be delivered by the troops of the Southwestern Front to Krakow - Katowice. That is why three mechanized corps (4th, 8th, 15th), numbering 2627 tanks, including 721 KB and T-3, were deployed at the very top of the "Lvov ledge". In total, there were eight (!!!) mechanized corps in the composition of the troops of the South-Western Front.

An auxiliary strike on Lublin and Warsaw was to be delivered by the troops of the left wing of the Western Front - and in the forests near Bialystok, next to the tape of the Warsaw highway, we find the 6th mechanized corps (1131 tanks, including 452 new KB and T-34). And three more

other mechanized corps hid in remote places of the close "Bialystok ledge". In

the second echelon of the South-Western and Western fronts, in the area of Shepetovka and Orsha, two other "heroes" were put forward - 5MK (1070 tanks) and 7MK

(959 tanks). The troops of the Southern (Odessa district) and Northwestern (Baltic district) fronts were given much more modest tasks: to firmly cover the flanks of the strike groups and prevent the enemy from invading the territory of the districts. That is why in their composition we find only two corps, staffed by half of the state, and with old tanks.

Everything is simple, clear and completely logical. Only the location of that particular mechanized corps looks like a mystery, with the story about which we began this part of the book.

**“And he went, swept up by the team ...”**

The first in number, "age" and staffing of the mechanized corps before the war was part of the Northern Front (Leningrad District). Why and why? Although the Leningrad Okrug is traditionally included in the list of "western border districts of the USSR" - what kind of "western border" is this? From the west, the district bordered on the Soviet Baltic states, and up to the borders of East Prussia from Leningrad as much as 720 km. The Leningrad Okrug was borderline only in relation to the four millionth Finland.

The Leningrad Military District was turning into a front with the name "Northern". At first glance, this is rather strange - it would be more logical to call it "Leningrad", "Baltic", at worst - "Karelian". But in Stalin's empire, accidents were extremely rare. "In mid-June 1941, a group of senior

officials of the district, headed by the commander of the district, Lieutenant General M.M. Popov, went on a field trip near Murmansk and Kandalaksha, "recalls one of the participants in this trip, Air Chief Marshal (in those days - the commander of the district Air Force) A.A. Novikov [39]. Murmansk is not just the north, it is already the polar north. Further, Comrade Marshal, with a feeling of deep indignation, describes,

how Popov and other Soviet generals watch the pillars of dust raised over the forest roads by Finnish troops advancing towards the border. In other words, the "field trip" of the command of the district (front) took place in the immediate vicinity of the Finnish border. Looking at the "forest roads" in the adjacent territory (in the military language this is called "reconnaissance") so captivated the commander that Lieutenant General Popov returned to Leningrad only on June 23, and the entire first day of the Soviet-German war, the front (district) was commanded by an arrival from Moscow as a representative of the Stavka K.A. Meretskov [18]. Of course, it can be assumed that General Popov's trip to Murmansk was connected with the

preparation of the district troops to repel the future Nazi invasion. Alas, it is not. No one expected the German offensive in the Arctic. What is very eloquently evidenced by the memoirs of Lieutenant Colonel X. Reisen, commander of the II / KG30 bomber group, about the first raid on Murmansk on June 22, 1941: "... we did not meet either fighter or anti-aircraft opposition. Even low-altitude ground attack planes were not fired upon... enemy aircraft literally did not

exist, German aircraft operated over Soviet territory without interference..." [19] the beginning of hostilities, he leaves for Murmansk to prepare the city for "defense against the Germans", but immediately leaves it as soon as the German attack becomes a fait accompli ...

It is possible to write about the transfer of the 1st Panzer Division that its goal was to "strengthen the defense of Murmansk." Can. Paper will endure everything. But why take the Soviet generals for complete fools? If they wanted to transport a tank division to Murmansk, they would have been transported, the Kirov railway was brought just to Murmansk. What was the need to turn left 260 km to the destination and unload the division in a deserted and roadless forest-tundra?

And how could a division equipped with BT light tanks strengthen the defenses of the Soviet Arctic? Let us turn once again to the memoirs of the commander of the 1st TD, General V.I. Baranova:

“... the actions of the tankers were complicated by the rugged terrain. Off-road, rocks and steep hills covered with forests, hollows and clearings overgrown with bushes and dotted with boulders, lakes, mountain rivers, marshy swamps... The use of tanks even as part of a battalion was out of the question. The battles were fought in small groups, platoons and even vehicles from

ambushes...” [7] In such an “anti-tank terrain”, a high-speed BT inevitably lost its main quality - mobility. And there were never any other special advantages for this combat vehicle with bulletproof armor and a light 45-mm cannon. So, was it really possible for a tank division to be taken to distant lands only to tear it apart into small groups and “act as separate vehicles from ambushes”? To “strengthen the defense”, it would be much easier and more effective to transfer a dozen heavy artillery regiments of the RGK to the Arctic in the same echelons, and to ambush not light tanks armed with a “forty-five” (a fragmentation projectile of which weighed 1.4 kg), but heavy howitzers of caliber 152 or, even better, 203 mm. So they would have met the enemy with shells weighing 43-100 kg, from which you can’t hide even among granite boulders.

Nevertheless, the 1st Panzer arrived precisely in Alakurtti (and precisely in those days when Soviet generals looked at Finnish forest roads through binoculars) not by chance, and not at all out of stupidity, but in accordance with an amazingly beautiful Plan. We will discuss this plan a little later, and now we will turn again to the events of June 17, 1941. It was on this

day, when the 1st TD began loading into echelons leaving for the Arctic, that the command staff of the 10th MK departed for staff exercises. The leadership of the district decided to conduct these exercises in the north of the Karelian Isthmus, in the Vyborg region, near the Finnish border. At 9 am on June 21, something changed, the exercises were unexpectedly interrupted, and all commanders were ordered to immediately return to their

units [17]. At two in the morning on June 22, 1941 (at the very time when the echelons with the 1st Panzer Division were approaching the unloading station), the general himself arrived at the command post of the 21st TD of the 10th mechanized corps, in the village of Chernaya Rechka near Leningrad.

commander of the 23rd, the largest of the three armies of the Northern Front. The lieutenant general personally assigned the commander of the 21st TD, Colonel Bunin, the task of preparing

the division for action. At 12.00 on June 22, a combat alert was announced in the division, with units leaving for their assembly areas on alert [17]. The next day, at 6 a.m. on June 23, the 21st Panzer Division received a combat order from the headquarters of the 10th MK about speaking to the Ilya-Noskua area (now the city of Svetogorsk, Leningrad

Region), a few kilometers from the Finnish border. The author did not have at his disposal the text of the "Journal of Combat Operations" of other divisions of the 10th MK (24th tank and 198th motorized), but, judging by the fact that they left the area of permanent deployment in Pushkin and Oranienbaum in the same time, as the 21st TD, and moved in the same direction, it can be assumed that on June 22, 41, they received similar orders from the

command of the corps and the 23rd Army. It's time to get to know this mechanized corps better now. The 10th mechanized corps (commander - Major General I.G. Lazarev) was equipped and prepared for combat operations much worse than the 1st MK. Different sources give different figures for the number of tanks in the 10th MK: from 469 to 818 units [3, 8]. Such confusion in the numbers, in all likelihood, is due to the fact that many T-26 and BT tanks of early releases were adopted by the corps, which were rapidly decommissioned before the start of the war in anticipation of the arrival of new equipment.

To a greater extent, this remark referred to the 24th Panzer Division of the 10th Mechanized Corps, formed on the basis of the 11th Reserve Tank Regiment and receiving heavily worn out training equipment from it: 139 BT-2 and 142 BT-5 (a total of 281 production tanks 1932-1934). When the 24th TD began to advance to the initial area for the offensive, out of the 281 available tanks, 49 were left at the place of permanent deployment as out of order. After that, out of 232 tanks that went on a campaign, only 177 tanks reached the forest area in the Svetogorsk region. In all

respects, things were better in another tank division of the 10th MK. The 21st Panzer Division was formed on the basis of the 40th Red Banner Tank Brigade, which earned its order for

courage and skill shown in the battles on the Karelian Isthmus. By the beginning of the war, the 21st TD had 217 T-26 light tanks on the list [8]. And this division performed the march much more organized. In the journal of combat operations of the 21st Panzer we read: "... on the march there were lags of individual tanks and vehicles, which were quickly restored by the division's closing service and sent along the route" [17]. As for the

third division of the 10th MK - the 198th motorized - it had only a few dozen serviceable tanks, and in fact was an ordinary rifle division with an unusually large number of vehicles. Everything is relative. We will refer to this golden rule, so diligently

forgotten by the communist "historians", more than once. Of course, in comparison with the 1st MK (1039 tanks and 4730 vehicles for various purposes, from gas tanks to refrigerators and showers, the latest tracked tractors and the latest howitzers in artillery regiments), the 10th MK looks simply unarmed. But they were going to fight not with their neighbor in the district, but with some other enemy ... On the same day and hour, when huge rumbling and fairly smoking columns of tanks, armored cars, tracked tractors of the 10th

mechanized corps moved through Leningrad On the morning of June 23, 1941, on the morning of June 23, 1941, the main strike force of the Northern Front moved along the Leningrad highway from Pskov to Gatchina (Krasnogvardeysk): two divisions (3rd Panzer and 163rd Motorized) from the 1st MK.

"Tanks rushed, raising the wind, formidable armor advanced ..."

Only they rushed in some strange direction. Not to war, but away from war. Or is it still for a war, but for a different one?

And at that time, on the most distant (still - distant) western approaches to Leningrad, a big trouble was brewing. From the

very first hours of the war in the Baltics, in the defense zone of the Northwestern Front, the course of hostilities clearly acquired the character of an unprecedented

rout. This is how Soviet military historians describe the events of those days in the monograph "1941 - Lessons and Conclusions": "... the consequences of the first enemy strikes turned out to be catastrophic for the troops of the North-Western Front. The troops of the covering armies began a disorderly retreat ... Having lost control, the front command could not accept

decisive measures to restore the situation and prevent the retreat of the 8th and 11th armies ... "[3] It is

worth noting that the "disorderly withdrawal" of the troops of the North-Western Front made a pre-planned retreat against the enemy! On June 23, 1941, the Chief of Staff of the German Ground Forces, F. Halder, writes in his famous "War Diary": The exception is, perhaps, the area in front of the front of

Army Group North, where, apparently, a withdrawal beyond the Western Dvina River was indeed planned and prepared in advance. The reasons for such preparations cannot yet be established ... "[12] Yes, the German generals did not have enough imagination to imagine our realities ... Let us return, however, to the description of these events given

Russian historians:

"... On June 26, the situation of the retreating troops deteriorated sharply. The 11th Army lost up to 75% of its equipment and up to 60% of its personnel. Its commander, Lieutenant General V.I. Morozov, reproached the front commander, Colonel General F.I. Kuznetsov in inaction ... the Military Council of the Front considered that he could not report in such a rude form, while F.I. Kuznetsov made the erroneous conclusion that the army headquarters, together with V.I. Morozov was captured and works under the dictation of the enemy... Discord arose among the command. Member of the Military Council Corps Commissar P.A. Dibrov, for example, reported that the chief of staff, Lieutenant General P. S. Klenov, was always ill, the work of the headquarters was not organized, and the front commander was nervous ...

"[3] While they were looking for an "extreme" at the headquarters of the North-Western Front, June 26 In 1941, in the Daugavpils region, Major General Trukhin, the head of the Operational Directorate of the headquarters of the North-Western Front, surrendered (later Trukhin actively collaborated with the Germans, headed the headquarters of the Vlasov "army" and ended his

life on the gallows on August 1, 1946) [20, p. 164]. For a correct understanding of further events, it is very important to note that the High Command in Moscow soberly assessed the situation and had no illusions that

the scattered remnants of the uncontrollable North-Western Front will be able to contain the advance of the German troops.

Already on June 24 (that is, on the third day of the war!) a decision was made to create a defensive strip at the turn of the Luga River - 550 km west of the border, 90 km to the streets of Leningrad [21]. At the same time, on June 25, the Headquarters decided to conduct a counterattack against the 56th Wehrmacht tank corps, which had broken through to Daugavpils. In an effort to somehow delay the German offensive on the natural defensive line of the Western Dvina River, the command of the Red Army involved in this counterattack the completely understaffed 21st mechanized corps (the planned completion date for the formation of this corps was set for 1942) and even the 5th air - landing (!) Corps, which had neither the appropriate weapons nor proper training to fight tanks. In other words, they tried to plug the gap in the crumbling defense front with everything that was at hand. And in this situation, the most powerful in the northwestern theater of

operations, the 1st mechanized corps (which even after sending the 1st TD to Lapland still had six times more tanks than Lelyushenko's 21st mechanized corps!), Breaking the roads with tracks of hundreds tanks, went north, to Gatchina, i.e. in the exact opposite direction from the front line!

By the way, the Germans themselves were very discouraged by the disappearance of the "Pskov tank group", inexplicable for them. At first it seemed to them that the 1st MK left Pskov to the south. On June 22, 1941, Halder notes in his diary: "... the Russian

motorized Pskov group ... was discovered in 300 km south of the previously assumed area of its concentration. .."

Then - the following version (entry dated June 24):

"... of all the operational reserves of the enemy known to us, it is currently unclear only the location of the Pskov tank group. Perhaps it was transferred to the area between Siauliai and the Western Dvina ... "The next day, June 25,

Halder was informed that "the 7th tank corps of the enemy was transferred from the Pskov region through the Western Dvina to the area south of Riga" [12]. Let's not be too strict in

assessing the work of German military intelligence. It just could not occur to them where they really need to



look for the 1st mechanized corps. And they did not have reconnaissance aircraft with such a range that would allow them to record the movements of the tank units of the Northern Front. Now, if they had a reconnaissance satellite, then a truly fantastic sight would open from its "board".

From the border of East Prussia to the Western Dvina, two long columns in a northeast direction moved two German tank corps from the 4th Panzer Group: the 41st under the command of Reinhardt and the 56th under the command of Manstein. Further, on a huge three-hundred-kilometer space, ordinary peaceful (if you look at it from space) life went on. And further east, in the same northwest direction, in the same clouds of dust and smoke, two Soviet mechanized corps moved: the 1st MK - from Pskov to Leningrad, the 10th MK - from Leningrad to Vyborg.

And what is quite surprising is that the marching Soviet and warring German divisions moved almost at the same speed! Corps Manstein passed 255 km from the border to Daugavpils (Dvinsk) in four days. The average rate of progress is 64 km per day.

The Reinhardt corps passed from the border to the town of Krustpils on the Western Dvina in five days. The average rate of progress is 53 km per day. And the

tank divisions of the 10th mechanized corps reached the concentration area indicated by him northeast of Vyborg, 150 km from Leningrad, only by the end of the day on June 24th. The divisions of the elite 1st mechanized corps also needed two days to march from Pskov to Gatchina (200 km in a straight line). Strictly speaking,

the rate of advance of Soviet tank divisions was still one and a half times higher.

But the Germans did not just march, but (as is commonly believed) they also "overcame the fierce resistance of the Red Army."

The inability of the mechanized units to organize a forced march was the first unpleasant surprise that the command of the Northern Front encountered. The low rates were by no means connected with the special slowness of Soviet tanks (the BT can still be considered the fastest tank in history), but with the ugly organization of the traffic control service and the evacuation of faulty vehicles. In specially

The order of the commander of the 1st mechanized corps dated June 25, 1941 [8] devoted to this issue noted that the cars followed in columns spontaneously, overtaking each other, stopping at the request of the drivers in unplanned parking lots, creating traffic jams. There was no collection of stragglers and repair

of faulty machines. Things were not much better in the 10th mechanized corps. The length of the advance route of the 24th Panzer Division was 160 kilometers, which it covered in 49 hours! The average march speed is 3.5 km / h (if you remember, D. Pavlov assumed that the mechanized corps would not just march, but advance at a pace of 15 km / h!). In the 21st Panzer Division, tanks used up 14-15 engine hours during a two-day march, which clearly indicates that even in this best-trained and best-equipped division, half of the "march" consisted of standing in traffic jams and traffic jams. Be that as it may, by June 25-26, all units

and formations of the 1st and 10th mechanized corps deployed in the areas indicated by them over a vast area from Gatchina to the Arctic, put people and equipment in order after a multi-day march, and sent to the Finnish border, and as it has now become known from the memoirs of living participants in the event, and FOR the Finnish border, reconnaissance groups and ...

**And** nothing happened. The ground (let's emphasize this word with a thick line) forces of the Northern Front (14th, 7th, 23rd armies consisting of fifteen rifle, two motorized, four tank divisions and a separate rifle brigade) froze in agonizing and inexplicable inaction.

### **At dawn on June 25, 1941...**

While the troops of the Northern Front (Leningrad Military District) made these mysterious regroupings, the fighting in the Baltic continued to develop in the same, i.e. catastrophic direction. Only in the Daugavpils region, a desperately bold attack by the tankers of the 21st mechanized corps of Lelyushenko slowed down the enemy's advance for a couple of days. In all other sectors, the Germans crossed the Western Dvina almost without hindrance, reaching the "finish line" Rezhitsa - Pskov - Leningrad.

The only reserve that the Soviet command could immediately use was the very powerful aviation forces of the Leningrad District. Bridges and crossings across the Western Dvina were within the reach of the 2nd, 44th, 58th (Staraya Russa region), 201st, 202nd, 205th (Gatchina region) bomber regiments [23]. Did the Soviet military command understand the enormous role that aviation could play in holding the strategically important water line? How else to understand! A few days later, when in Belarus, in the strip of the defeated Western Front, the Germans began to cross the Berezina, the People's Commissar of Defense Timoshenko himself gave the order, according to which literally everything that could fly was involved in the destruction of the crossings across the Berezina. From light bombers Su-2 to heavy and clumsy, like a river barge, TB-3. Tymoshenko's order required bombing continuously, from low altitudes. German

historians called those days "air Verdun". Our aircraft suffered terrible losses. Regiments of long-range DB-3 bombers, in no way suitable for low-altitude operations, were melting like a candle in the wind. Pilots and navigators of long-range aviation were killed - professionals with a level of training unique for the Red Army Air Force. The Headquarters paid this price for the opportunity to win a few days to transfer reserves to Belarus from the internal districts. And, we note, none of the later historians and military experts has ever criticized this cruel, but justified by the situation, decision of the people's commissar ...

Let's return, however, to the Baltics. Could the Air Force of the Northern Front deliver a tangible blow to the crossings on the Western Dvina (Daugava)? On the eve of the war, the six above-mentioned bomber aviation regiments had 201 SBs in good condition. In addition, three bomber air regiments (35th, 50th, 53rd) from the 4th air division (the region of Tartu in Estonia), which was operationally subordinate to the Northern Front from the start of hostilities, could also be involved in a massive airstrike. This is another 119 serviceable bombers [23]. The distance of 400-450

km from the airfields on which these units were based to the Zapadnaya Dvina made it possible to use "obsolete" SB bombers with a maximum bomb load. Moreover,

in contrast to the tragic situation that developed in the sky over the Berezina, the bombers could be covered along the entire route to the target and back by the latest MiG-3 fighters from the 7th, 159th and 153rd fighter regiments. According to Soviet historians, there were very few of these newest ones: only 162 MiGs in good condition. This is indeed less than we would like, but one and a half times more than the number of the only fighter squadron of the Luftwaffe JG 54 in the entire northwestern theater of operations (98 serviceable Messerschmitts Bf-109 F as of June 24, 1941) [24].

If this was not enough, then the Northern Front included the 10th, 137th and 72nd bomber regiments in the area of Murmansk and Petrozavodsk, which could be quickly relocated south to Leningrad. Maybe this is not as much as you want, but

the 1st Luftwaffe Air Fleet, which was paving the way for the German divisions of Army Group North, had only 210 serviceable bombers (as of the morning of June 24, 1941) [24]. It is noteworthy that in the report of the headquarters of the North-Western Front No. 3, compiled at 12 noon on June 22, it was said that "the enemy has not yet brought into action significant forces of the Air Force, limited to the action of individual groups and single aircraft" [61]. The assessment is quite understandable, if we take into account that the actual number of serviceable combat aircraft of all types (330 units) in the 1st Luftwaffe Air Fleet turned out to be exactly ten times less than what the top leadership of the Red Army expected to see in this direction. At least, this is the conclusion that can be drawn from the materials of the famous operational-strategic "game" declassified only in 1993, conducted by the General Staff in January 1941 [108].

The next question is whether the command of the Air Force of the Northern Front was capable of organizing such a large-scale air offensive? The criterion of

truth is practice. Practice has shown - how capable! At dawn on June 25,

1941, all of the above aviation formations, as well as large aviation forces of the Northern and

The Baltic fleets dealt a powerful surprise blow to the enemy.

Here is how the chief air marshal of the USSR describes these events A.A. Novikov:

“... early in the morning on June 25, I was at the communication center, located in the basement of the district

headquarters building. Final preparations, clarification of data, short negotiations with the commanders of air formations, and engines roared at the airfields. An air armada of 263 bombers and 224 fighters and attack aircraft rushed at the enemy ... The raid lasted several hours, one group succeeded another ... Murmansk... This multi-day operation, the first in the history of Soviet aviation, convinced us...” [39] And so on. Only this blow did not hit the Germans at all! The air armada rushed to ... Finland.

Hundreds of tons of bombs fell on bridges, roads, factories and railway stations, cities and airfields throughout the

country, "from Vyborg to Murmansk," as Comrade Marshal writes without a shadow of embarrassment. “The air raids that took place against our country, the bombing of undefended cities, the killing of civilians - all this showed more clearly than any diplomatic assessments what is the attitude of the Soviet Union towards Finland,” Finnish Prime Minister Jukko Rangel told parliament deputies [26]. On the evening of June 25, the Finnish parliament announced that Finland was at war with the USSR. Let's leave Finnish historians the right to continue discussing whether the air attack was the reason for Finland's entry into the war, or whether it was simply used as a plausible pretext by the Finnish leadership, who dreamed of revenge for the tragedy of the "winter war" of 1939/40. We will try

compare what happened at dawn on June 25 on the Soviet-Finnish border with what began in the early morning of June 22 of the same year on another border, the Soviet-German one. The reader, who is offended by any comparison of Stalin with Hitler, can be immediately consoled: there will be more differences than coincidences. Absolutely identical were only those vile

the methods used by both tyrants, and those "rotten excuses" that Soviet and fascist propagandists tried to confuse the world community with. Just like Germany, the

Soviet Union did not present any claims to its future victim in terms of its non-compliance with the peace treaties and maintained normal diplomatic relations with it until the last hour. They tried to lull the future victim of aggression with false manifestations of friendship and mutual understanding. So, just three days before the start of massive bombardments (on the evening of June 22, 1941), Pavel Orlov, the Soviet ambassador to Helsinki, announced that the Soviet government would respect the neutrality of Finland! [26] It was only after the aggression became a fait accompli that the Nazi and Communist liars began to sing a song about a "forced, pre-emptive strike." This is where all the similarities end. Then one

starts  
only differences.

In the first wave of air raids on Soviet airfields in the Baltic at dawn on June 22, 1941, only 76 bombers and 90 Luftwaffe fighters took part [25, p. 270]. Finland was bombed much more thoroughly. It is understandable - there was something to bomb (see above the composition of the aviation of the Northern Front). German aviation relocated to border airfields a few weeks (or even days) before the start of hostilities. Luftwaffe pilots were operating over new, unfamiliar territory. Stalin's falcons flew along routes familiar to the smallest detail - during the first (winter 1939/40) Finnish war, Soviet aviation performed more than 80 thousand combat sorties. The Germans had to crush the enemy aircraft, many times superior to them in numbers. The Soviet Air Force was able to operate practically ignoring the opposition of several dozen Finnish fighters.

The political consequences of June 22 and June 25 were also completely different. The treacherous attack on the USSR was qualified by the international Nuremberg Tribunal as the gravest crime of the Nazi regime. The Soviet Union participated in the work of the Nuremberg Tribunal - but by no means as one of the accused ... German historians have done in

post-war years, a huge amount of work to reveal the mechanism of preparation and unleashing a world slaughter. Their Soviet "colleagues" acted much more

dexterously. In most popular military history books (these "books" include university textbooks on the history of the USSR and the CPSU), there is not even the slightest mention of Finnish cities blazing with fire. In those very few works that mention the story of the June bombing of Finland, these attacks by Soviet aircraft are given a completely surprising interpretation. It turns out that it was a "strike on enemy airfields" having a purely defensive purpose. It turns out that 22 Finnish bombers (the best of which were the British Blenheims - an analogue of our "hopelessly outdated" SB) created such a threat to Leningrad that only a preemptive strike could save the city. Some of the latest MiGs in the amount of 162 vehicles were not enough to repel possible future raids. We open, for example, a solid monograph by M.N. Kozhevnikov [27] and we read the following verbatim in it: "... in order to weaken the enemy's aviation grouping and disrupt the planned raid on Leningrad, the Stavka ordered the preparation and

conduct of massive strikes against the airfields of Finland and Northern Norway, where the air units of the 5th air fleet of Germany were based and Finnish aviation ... "That's class! This is the work of a master! Just one small letter

"and" - and everything turns upside

down. On the airfields of German-occupied Norway in the spring of 1940, there were German air units, including the aforementioned bomber group II / KG30. Indeed, from the first day of the war, they bombed the city and port of Murmansk, the Kirov railway. There was

not a single squadron of the Luftwaffe at the Finnish airfields, and it was necessary to defend the city of Lenin from German aviation in other places - on the southwestern approaches to it. Finnish aviation was based on Finnish airfields, which until 1945 had Mannerheim's order not to make any flights over Leningrad [152]. This order was strictly observed even when the front line of the second Soviet-Finnish war that began on June 25, 1941, passed within a few minutes of a low-speed bomber flight to

Palace Square. But even before the start of this war, Finnish aviation, due to its small number and technical backwardness, did not create serious problems for the Red Army. That is why the Finnish airfields were neither the only, nor even the most important target for Soviet air strikes. In terms of covering the mobilization and deployment of troops of the Leningrad Military District, the tasks of the district (front) aviation were formulated very clearly:

“... item 6. To gain air supremacy by active aviation operations and to disrupt and delay the concentration and deployment of enemy troops with powerful strikes against the main railway junctions, bridges, crossings and groupings of troops ...”[VIZH, 1996, No.

6]. In other words, the destruction of Finnish aviation was envisaged, but only as one of the components of completely non-defensive plans - for “delaying the deployment of enemy forces” is possible only in one case - if the enemy begins to deploy after your attack. And Comrade Kozhevnikov, with the help of the union

"and", easily and simply dumped everything in one heap. Finnish and German aviation, Finnish and German-occupied Norwegian airfields, absolutely legal Soviet air raids on Luftwaffe airfields in Northern Norway (if there were such raids at all) with a massive bombardment of the country, the neutrality of which the Stalinist government undertook to observe.

The incredulous reader already senses the catch. Now the author will again refer to some "sources", from which it follows that there was no German aviation in Finland. And what are these "sources", and can these sources be trusted? The

question is really serious. It's about war and peace. Therefore, we will refer to such a “source” that cannot be faked.

“On the twenty-second of June, exactly at four o'clock, Kyiv was bombed, and they announced to us ...” And so it was, as it is sung in this simple song. Kyiv was bombed, and Minsk, and Kaunas, and Riga, and Sevastopol, and Odessa... And why wasn't Leningrad bombed? Is it really possible to compare the military, economic, political significance of all these cities with Leningrad alone?



Comrade Stalin, speaking on April 17, 1940 at a meeting of the top command staff of the Red Army [140], said that a third of the USSR's military industry was concentrated in Leningrad. In this he can be trusted. He knew his industry better than many people's commissars, whom he shot every two years. In addition, Leningrad is also the most important railway junction, and the base of the navy, and the country's main shipyard. How could the Germans forget about him? And they didn't forget about him. That is why the tank corps of Manstein and Reinhardt, regardless of losses, rushed through the Western Dvina to Pskov, that is why Hitler removed from the Moscow direction and turned in August 41 to Leningrad another, the 39th tank corps, that the importance of the city on the Neva for the German command was quite obvious. And when, following the advancing Wehrmacht, the air groups of the 1st Air Force of the Luftwaffe were able to relocate to the Novgorod and Pskov airfields, they began to furiously bomb Leningrad. So, dear reader, if you want to know for

sure whether German aviation was based on Finnish airfields on June 25, then just ask the old Leningraders whether their city was bombed in JUNE 1941? Let us return again to the memoirs of the Chief Air Marshal: "...

the ground troops of the district were also preparing to repulse the enemy. Everyone then was firmly convinced that the troops of the district would have to act only on the Soviet-Finnish border - from the Barents Sea to the Gulf of Finland. No one in those days even imagined that events would very soon turn out completely differently than we had planned before the war ... "

Like this. If not for the unfortunate interference from Hitler, then the Soviet troops would again begin to "act" along the entire length of the Finnish border, from the Baltic to the Barents Sea. Memoirs of A.A. Novikov were published in 1970. Long before the "Icebreaker" ... Let's not find fault with the words of the marshal. Humans tend to make mistakes. You used to tell the truth, and then you chase this sparrow... Let's take a better look at what the central Soviet newspapers wrote in those days, every word in which was checked by a dozen overt and covert censors.

On June 24, Izvestia reported (albeit still with reference to "Swedish sources") that "among the overwhelming majority

the population of Finland is dissatisfied with the ruling regime. That's it. The war is on for the third day, "the consequences of the first enemy strikes turned out to be catastrophic", and Izvestia is concerned about the dissatisfaction of the foreign "brothers in the class" ... resounded completely

distinctly:

"... the decrepit, blood-splattered Mannerheim was pulled out of naphthalene and put at the head of the Finnish fascists ... the serfs of German fascism will get what they deserve ..." All this

rhetoric literally repeated the headlines of Pravda from November 26-29, 1939, word for word, when this worthy newspaper

expressed in this language:

"... the pea jester in the post of prime minister ... to teach presumptuous warriors a lesson ... enraged dogs will be destroyed ..."

On June 29, 1941, a large article "On the Border" appears in Izvestia.

Through each line, it repeated the idea that the "liberation campaign" in Finland would soon be continued:

"... we again arrived at places memorable for those days of war, when the White Finnish units retreated in disarray under crushing blows ... .. in a large clearing

among a high pine forest stood recent hikers...

...their calm confidence in victory is based on the experience of harsh fighting on the Karelian Isthmus.

For many young fighters, this is already the third campaign... ..I took part in battles with the White Finns. Now, as in those days, I and all the people of my unit have only one desire, one thought ... "In a word -" accept us, beautiful Suomi ...> One of the most

striking, memorable episodes of V. Suvorov is the chapter in The Last Republic where he talks about how he simulated the 1939/40 Winter War on an English supercomputer. Remember, V. Suvorov asked the car such initial data as snow of one and a half meters, temperature below minus 35, reinforced concrete pillboxes with many meters of overlap, and

she, blinking her lights in fright, answered that without an atomic bomb, the Mannerheim Line could not be broken through. Better not try.

It's a pity, it's a pity that Suvorov didn't take advantage of the moment and didn't ask the supermachine what she thinks and understands about the June (1941) offensive of the Red Army on the Finnish front: the thickness of the snow cover is zero whole, the thickness of non-existent concrete on the missing pillboxes is horseradish tenths, the temperature of the gentle northern

summer is plus 20. The attackers have a threefold superiority in artillery, absolute dominance in the air.

In the near operational rear of the Red Army there is a huge city with a powerful repair, production, and hospital base. The northern front had at least an eightfold numerical superiority in tanks over a potential enemy. At least. Since, in addition to the 1st and 10th mechanized (tank) corps, each of the fifteen rifle divisions of the district had its own reconnaissance battalion, armed with light amphibious tanks - the best suited for combat operations among the lakes of Karelia. As of June 1, 1941, there were 180 of these tanks in the LenVO [1, p. 475, 482, 597]. Let's also take into account the fact that most of the 86 Finnish tanks were captured Soviet T-26s and BTs captured during the "winter war". Their technical condition is not in doubt, given the complete absence of spare parts, and even the condition in which they were captured. So how, if not with an atomic bomb, could the Finns stop the triumphal march of the Red Army on Helsingfors? The situation on the Northern Front, where a small and waiting enemy could not prevent the troops of the Leningrad District from mobilizing and deploying forces in the planned

volumes and terms, was in a certain sense unique. While on the western border the offensive of the Wehrmacht on June 22, 1941 interrupted the planned course of the mobilization and deployment of the Red Army, the Northern Front continued to operate strictly according to pre-war plans. The flywheel, untwisted on June 17, 1941, could not be stopped either by the Nazi invasion, or even by the Germans breaking through the Western Dvina. Ignoring these "unfortunate interference", the command of the Northern Front continued to play out the worked out scenario step by step.

invasion of Finland. That is why the fighting on the front of the second Soviet-Finnish war that began on June 25, 1941 can serve as a kind of model for the failed Thunderstorm. Some authors have

written, and many readers have agreed with them, that in the summer of 1941 the Red Army (if the Germans had not gotten ahead of it) could have reached Berlin. From Vyborg to Helsinki is much closer. And the enemy is incomparably weaker. And the Red Army delivered the first blow. But to reach - it was not possible. But how beautifully it was conceived ...

### **"When Comrade Stalin sends us into battle..."**

In order to appreciate the beauty of the Plan, we need a map - not a map of the battles of the Great Patriotic War, but a map of the railways and roads of Scandinavia. The war plan is tied to the

roads. So it was in the times of Xerxes and Batu, and everything remained the same in the twentieth century. Moreover, the dependence of the armies of the 20th century on logistics (ammunition, fuel) further increased the importance of transport communications in planning and conducting operations. Finland can only be considered a "small country" in terms

of population. Finland is larger than Austria, Hungary, Belgium, Denmark and Holland combined in area.

Just like in Russia, this territory is inhabited and developed extremely unevenly. The dense network of railways in the south of the country becomes more and more sparse in the center, until it turns into one single thread, which at the northern point of the Gulf of Bothnia, near the city of Kemi, bifurcates: one branch goes west to Norway, connecting Finnish roads with ice-free Norwegian ports ; the other goes to the east, to the border with Soviet Karelia. In the same place, through Rovaniemi, Kemijärvi and Salla, the only "through" road in the area passes, connecting the western (sea) and eastern (Soviet) borders. Even further north of Rovaniemi, through hundreds of kilometers of swampy taiga and tundra, there is a road to Petsamo, the northernmost city in Finland. Petsamo is Europe's largest nickel mines,

this is armored steel and heat-resistant alloys for aircraft engines, this is the most important export item of pre-war Finland. True, today it is the Russian city of Pechenga.

And now let's put on this map the unloading area of the 1st Panzer Division (do you still remember how it all began?) - and a simple, like all ingenious, plan to invade Finland will be revealed to you in all its glory.

Just one hit with a powerful tank fist (and in terms of the number of tanks, Baranov's division was almost twice as large as Manstein's tank corps!) From Alakurtti to Kemijärvi, and the 1st tank breaks out of the thicket onto a solid road. The forces of the Finnish army in this region were too small to stop the Soviet tank avalanche: in the Kusamo area there was only one 6th infantry division, and 200 km from the line of the proposed offensive, in Sumosisalmi, another Finnish division, and the total number these two divisions, consolidated into the 3rd Corps under the command of Major General X. Siilasvuo, amounted to only 10 thousand people by the end of June (one and a half times less than the regular strength of the Soviet rifle division) [28]. Further, moving along the highway through Rovaniemi,

the 1st Panzer comes out to the Gulf of Bothnia, cuts the railway in Kemi - and the entire operational situation changes before our eyes. Petsamo, cut off from the whole world, can be safely renamed Pechenga - for this, the 14th Army (14, 52, 104, 122 rifle divisions) is deployed in the Murmansk region. Finnish nickel is forever lost to German industry, and the Finnish army is tightly cut off from the German troops that are already or may still be transferred to Norway in the future. Of course, no matter how weak the enemy is, an attack to a depth of 300 km will

never be a "light walk". That is why they sent to Alakurtti a well-prepared, fully equipped, with extensive combat experience division with a commander for whom this war was to be the third in a row. For the sake of truth, we note that in theory there was also the possibility of a "direct maritime communication" between Germany and Finland

through the Finnish ports in the Gulf of Bothnia. At the same time, strategic

the significance of the railway line through Kemi to Norway seemed to be declining. But all pre-war plans proceeded from the fact that the Red Banner Baltic Fleet had enough forces and means (including a base on the Finnish peninsula of Hanko) in order to tightly close the Gulf of Finland and the Gulf of Bothnia for the German fleet. For a

"furious march" along the highway through Rovaniemi to the Gulf of Bothnia, a high-speed BT, capable of dropping caterpillars and accelerating to 60-70 km / h, was the best tool of war available at that time. The appearance of a Soviet tank division in Alakurtti so clearly revealed the content and purpose of the Plan that this transfer was delayed right up to June 17, and then it was carried out on an emergency basis, abandoning dozens of tanks in the Pskov military camp. And all so that the tank armada appeared on the Finnish border at the "very last moment." The

development of this wise and comprehensive (without any quotation marks) plan began already in the autumn of 1940, i.e. six months after the conclusion of the March 1940 peace treaty with Finland. On September 18, Timoshenko (People's Commissar of Defense) and Meretskov (Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army) signed document No. 103203 - "Considerations on the deployment of the armed forces for the war with Germany."

We note right away that among these "considerations" there is not a single word about Germany! Without any connection with the possible use of the Finnish territory by the German army, the Soviet command sets the following tasks: "... invade central Finland, defeat the main forces of the Finnish army here and seize the central part of Finland ... simultaneously with the main blow, strike in the direction of Rovaniemi - Kemi, in order to cut off northern Finland and interrupt the direct communications of central Finland with Sweden and Norway by going to the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia..." [16, p. 253] The main blow was supposed to be delivered

in two directions: through Savonlinna to Mikkeli and through Lappeenranta to Heinola. And what is remarkable - in June 1941, it was in the center of the alleged main strike zone, opposite the city of Imatra, that the 10th MK was concentrated. And for the offensive through Rovaniemi on Kemi it was planned to deploy

21st Army in the Alakurtti area - i.e. exactly where the 1st Panzer Division was unloaded on June 22, 1941 ...

A month and a half after the signing of the "considerations", the head of the Soviet government, Molotov, went to Berlin to meet with Hitler. The negotiations lasted two days: November 12 and 13, 1940. From the transcript of the negotiations it follows that the discussion of the "Finnish question" took a good half of the time! True, this discussion took place in the form of a dialogue between two deaf people. Molotov, with the monotony of a broken gramophone record, repeated the same set of arguments: the whole of Finland, according to a secret protocol, was transferred to the sphere of interests of the Soviet Union, therefore the USSR has the right to proceed with the "final decision" at any time convenient for it. Hitler, more and more hysterical, replied that he would not tolerate any new war in the Baltic region, since this new war would give the British both a reason and an opportunity for intervention, and Germany needed uninterrupted supplies of iron ore from Sweden [69, p. 41-47, 63-71]. This time, the high negotiating godfathers did not agree on anything in particular and parted ways with a feeling of deep distrust of each other.

Then came November 25, 1940. On this day, Molotov handed over to the German ambassador, Count Schulenburg, a draft agreement on the conditions for creating a four-power pact, i.e. Nazi Germany, fascist Italy, militaristic Japan and the "unfailingly peaceful" Soviet Union [69, p. 136]. On the same day, People's Commissar Timoshenko sent a directive to the LenVO command to prepare for a war with Finland. The first words of this document sounded like this: "In the conditions of the war of the USSR, only against Finland (emphasized by me. - M.S.) for the convenience of control and material support of the troops ..."

Further, the directive set the task of "defeating the armed forces of Finland, seizing its territory ... and reaching the Gulf of Bothnia on the 45th day of the operation." Helsinki was going to be taken on the "25th day of the operation." The detailed development of all components of the operation plan was required to be completed by February 15, 1941 [16, p. 418-423]. It is worth noting two points in particular: in this document there is no link between the upcoming war against Finland and the possible use of its territory by the troops of Nazi Germany, as well as the extremely decisive goals of the war. No "movements"

borders" away from the city of Lenin - only the complete occupation of Finland and "access to the Gulf of Bothnia"!

Work boiled over. Already in March 1941, Deputy People's Commissar of Defense General of the Army Meretskov held a multi-day operational game with the command of the LenVO, during which only offensive topics were worked out. Documentary evidence of this was published quite recently, but back in the good old days, the official "History of the Order of Lenin of the Leningrad Military District" told how "field trips on the Karelian Isthmus and the Kola Peninsula were instructive, during which the nature of the modern offensive operation was studied." Well, the Soviet generals considered Petsamo to be almost Pechenga. The then Chief of Staff of the 14th (Murmansk) Army L.S. Skvirsky recalls that in February 1941, having learned that negotiations were underway with Finland on the division of shares in nickel mines, he was very surprised: "Why buy if we will soon return the mines without that?" [33] It is noteworthy that this opinion completely coincided with the reports that Ambassador Paasikivi sent from Moscow to Helsinki: "The Soviet Union will use force against us if the problem of the mines is not resolved ..." The fact that the Soviet Union was going to speak in the role of the treacherous

aggressor, no wonder.

Was the invasion of Poland (September 1939) or the occupation of the Baltic states (June 1940) something other than an act of aggression against the states whose sovereignty the Stalinist leadership undertook to respect? Strange and surprising. Fully mobilized by the end of June 1941, the troops of the LenVO (Northern Front) were already withdrawn to the deployment areas, Soviet aviation continued the fierce bombing of Finland that began at dawn on June 25, and the ground operation still did not begin. Why? So far, our narrative has been based on a firm

based on facts and documents.

In this episode, we move on to the shaky ground of conjecture and hypotheses. The reader has every right to skip the end of this chapter for "lack of evidence", but, according to the author, at the end of June 1941, there was not enough



one single condition. The one and only, without which nothing happens in the army. There was no ORDER.

But there was no

order because there was no one to give it to: Comrade Stalin left work, and people with "hot hearts and clean hands" were already working with Comrade Meretskov.

War is war, but the "organs" worked. The machine of terror and lawlessness, which gained momentum and was almost no longer controlled by anyone, continued to capture more and more victims in its

millstones. On the second day of the war, June 23, 1941, a wave of arrests reached the very top of the military leadership: an army general, deputy people's commissar of defense, in the past - chief of the General Staff of the Red Army K.A. Meretskov. The same one who on the eve (June 21, 1941) was entrusted with the "general leadership of the Northern Front" by the decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee (see above).

But Kirill Afanasyevich Meretskov is not a stranger in the Leningrad District. Since 1939, he was the commander of the LenVO, then, during the first Finnish war, Meretskov led the 7th Army, which became the main striking force of the Red Army in the battles on the Karelian Isthmus. And now let's translate all

these circumstances into the language of the protocol. It turns out that the command of the Northern Front in June 1941 consisted of nominees, colleagues and just friends of the "exposed enemy of the people." Death breathed down their necks. And not that glorious death on the battlefield, for which every commander should be ready, but a terrible death in a torture chamber or execution cellar. And the inevitable in this case, reprisals against relatives and friends - in addition.

Is it possible to condemn Generals Popov and Nikishev (commander and chief of staff of the Northern Front) for not taking personal initiative in such a situation, especially in such a delicate issue as crossing the border of a neighboring state?

They had orders to put in place a cover plan. They completed it in full, accurately and on time. As required by statute. They did not have an order to

abandon the pre-war plan for the invasion of Finland and urgently transfer all mechanized

formations to meet the Germans advancing on Leningrad - and they did not withdraw a single tank from the Finnish

border. The bombardment of Finland was foreseen in advance (in the cover plan, 17 objects of priority bombing were named "by name") - and they successfully carried it out.

But regarding the border crossing already at the stage of concentration and deployment of troops in paragraph 8 of the cover plan, it was said rather vaguely:

"... under favorable conditions... at the direction of the main command, be ready to deliver swift strikes against the enemy..." [VIZH, 1996, No. 6]

Most likely, Popov was just waiting for the big bosses to decide for themselves whether "favorable conditions" had already developed, or if we still had to wait.

Yes, only the big bosses were completely busy at that time other things.

Chief of the General Staff G.K. Zhukov spent the first days of the war in Western Ukraine, trying to organize the offensive of the troops of the huge Southwestern Front (we will examine in detail what came of this in Part 3), and his first deputy, Chief of the Operations Directorate of the General Staff Vatutin, was instructed to save position on the Northwestern Front.

Meretskov, who was responsible for the northern sector of the front, was at that moment beaten with rubber truncheons and doused with investigator's urine. A new representative of the Headquarters in the North-Western direction was appointed only on July 10th. For lack of anything better, Stalin entrusted this matter to Marshal Voroshilov. True, it soon became clear that Commander-in-Chief Voroshilov was much worse than nothing, but it v  
Then.

People's Commissar of Defense Marshal Timoshenko, Deputy People's Commissar of Defense Marshal Budyonny, former (and future) Chief of the General Staff Marshal Shaposhnikov gathered at the headquarters of the Western Front near Mogilev at the end of June, and they had absolutely no time to think about some Imatra, Rovaniemi and other suomisalmi. On June 27-28, the tank groups of Hoth and Guderian, uniting east of Minsk, closed the encirclement around the 3rd, 10th and 4th armies of the Western Front. The 600,000th group of Soviet troops was defeated and

most of them were taken prisoner. On July 1, 1941, German tanks reached the Berezina. This meant that a third of the way from the border to Moscow had already been covered, and completed in just eight days!

And what did the Most Chief Boss do at this time? And the most important, although he did not even receive an ordinary secondary education, he already understood everything. Maybe that's why he understood so quickly and so correctly that his "universities" were underground work in a subversive organization that once successfully destroyed the Russian army right during the world war. Stalin specifically knew how empires collapse and multimillion-strong armies disappear. Therefore, it took him only seven days to understand what was the reason for the unheard-of defeat. The truth that was revealed at that moment turned out to be unreasonably difficult even for this person with the experience of Siberian exile, the bloody massacre of the Civil War and the deadly "showdown" with Trotsky in the 20s.

On the night of June 28-29, Stalin went to his dacha, where he spent two days in a state of complete prostration - June 29 and 30, not answering phone calls and not meeting with anyone. The

consequences of this are difficult to understand for a modern Russian who has been taught that the First President of sovereign Russia "worked in the country with documents" for several months. That's just the

Stalinist order was very different from the Yeltsin. Stalin delved into everything and commanded everything. With his signature, decisions were issued to replace the guide vanes of the centrifugal supercharger of the AM-35 aircraft engine or to exclude "a tarpaulin and one jack" from the transported spare parts for the T-34 tank. Without his consent, the issues of ballet performances at the Bolshoi Theater and the replacement in the song of the words "and the samurai flew to the ground" with the words "and the enemy flock flew to the ground" were not resolved (after the signing of the neutrality treaty with Japan on April 13, 1941). That is why the two-day absence of Stalin in the Kremlin could not but paralyze the work of the entire top echelon authorities.

Believe it or not, but the order to cross the border with Finland was received by the 10th Mechanized Corps of the 23rd Army of the Northern Front precisely after the comrades-in-arms of the "athletes' best friend" persuaded him to return to his workplace.

At midnight from July 1 to July 2, 1941, the 21st Panzer Division received a combat order:

"... at 6.00, cross the border in the Enso area and conduct combat reconnaissance ... establish the forces, composition and grouping of the enemy. By capturing control prisoners, establish the numbering of enemy units ...

... upon mastering Art. Imatra - blow up the station and set fire to the forest with flamethrower tanks. In the event of a successful action and the capture of the Yakola-Imatra lines, hold them until our infantry approaches ... "[17]

## route

You read the text of this order and think: how quickly, how inevitably times and customs are changing! Here before - what was

prettiness:

We will fan the world fire on the mountain to all bourgeois...

I left my hut, went to fight in order to give the land in Grenada to the

peasants... These are poems. And here is the text of combat order No. 01 of September 15, 1939: "The armies of the Belorussian Front go on the offensive with the task of assisting the rebellious workers and peasants of Belarus and Poland in overthrowing the yoke of the landowners and capitalists ..." [1, p. 113]

And what? Not even two years have passed - and on you: neither the world fire, nor the workers and peasants who have risen from hell. Everything is simple and prosaic: blow up the station in the adjacent territory, set fire to the forest...

True, neither one nor the other was done. In the "Journal of Combat Actions of the 21st Panzer Division" we read that "the reconnaissance detachment did not fully fulfill its task, did not reach Imatra, did not set fire to the enemy's forest, only established that this sector was defended by insignificant enemy forces ..."

Estimate, dear reader

how much more decent the commanders of 1941 were than the Soviet "historians" of subsequent decades. Already they (our historians) have always had an adversary "many times superior." Always. And everywhere. So, in the monograph "Battle for Leningrad" created by the collective genius of a group of military historians (Moscow, Military Publishing House, 1964, edited by Zubakov V.E.), Finnish troops, with

equal to our number of divisions, for some reason turned out to be twice as numerous (220 thousand versus 114 thousand) ...

On the evening of the first day of the offensive, at 23.30 on June 2 of the 41st year, the head of the armored department of the headquarters of the 23rd arrived at the headquarters of the 21st TD th Army, Major General Lavrinovich and set a new

(and in fact - the old) combat mission: "... from 6.00 3.7 to launch an attack on Imatra with the task of capturing Imatra and the isthmuses between the lakes Imalan-Jarvi, Saimaa, holding the latter until the infantry parts." The offensive of the tank division was to be supported by fire from four artillery battalions of the 115th rifle division. By noon on

July 3, the units took up their starting position for the offensive. The first failure in interaction immediately occurred: "Artillery was delayed in preparation and began it only at 13.00, firing 50-55 shells in an hour ..." In other words, each gun fired one or two shots in an hour. It must be assumed that such a "barrage of fire" rather warned the "White Finns" than suppressed their defenses. At 14:00, two regiments (motorized rifle and tank) of the 21st Panzer Division crossed the border and launched an offensive. In order to avoid accusations of bias, here is the FULL description of this offensive, as it is set out in the "Journal of Operations":

"... With the crossing of the state border, the enemy at first offered weak resistance, and our units quickly moved forward. By 18.00 3.7, the advanced companies reached the northern slopes of height 107.5, where they were met by organized enemy fire and retreated somewhat back ... By 22.00

3.7, the situation stabilized at the line: a forest path southeast of height 107.5, two houses north of Yakol, height 39.5. The 4th company of the 2nd battalion of the motorized rifle regiment met strong resistance from the enemy, who went on the attack, and by 22.00 3.7 with a fight retreated beyond our state border, losing three tanks burned out and one knocked out. By the decision of the division commander, the further offensive was stopped and a combat report was sent to the headquarters of the 23rd Army for permission to withdraw from the battle. We waited for this permission until 2.00. On July 4, at 2.25, Colonel Zaev, the chief of staff of the 10th MK, arrived with an order for the division to withdraw from the battle and concentrate in the Yaska area. At 2:30 the enemy, having secretly bypassed the flanks of

counteroffensive throughout the division. The counter-offensive began with strong machine-gun fire supported by mortars and artillery. In such an environment, the division commander boldly (so in the text. - M.S.) decides to withdraw from the battle. The exit from the battle was carried out according to the following plan ... By

4.00 on July 4, the units withdrew from the battle in an organized manner. The enemy went on the attack three times, but was always defeated and thrown back with

heavy losses ... "That's all. Forest path, two houses. That's the whole route of the Liberation Campaign-2. At six o'clock in the evening on July 3, the tank division clumsily poked into the Finnish defenses, by 4 o'clock in the morning on July 4 "boldly left the battle", pursued by excessively excited Finnish guys. Finally, at 20.00 on July 5, "an order was received to send a railway division. and by road to the Chernaya Rechka area, i.e. to

the area of the pre-war deployment of the corps. This is how it all ended. Turning Finland into a poor Russian Non-Black Earth region failed this time as well. Probably, if all the gasoline spent on the regrouping of the 10th MK from Leningrad to Imatra and back was simply poured onto the adjacent territory, the effect would be great. At least, the forest

would have been set on fire for sure ... Then the rout began. More precisely, the defeat of the mechanized corps (though still in the form of tearing a single armored "core" into

small "shots") began even earlier. As soon as the 10th MK was within the "reach zone" of the 23rd Army command, it (the command) behaved like a store manager, to whose warehouse a rare "deficit" was brought. All the charters, all the instructions, all the pre-war theory about the MASSIVE use of tanks as part of large mechanized formations, all the lessons of the German "blitz" in the West, learned many times in staff exercises -

everything was immediately fucked up and forgotten. Ten armored vehicles "at the disposal of the army headquarters", five tanks "for operations together with the 115th rifle division", a tank battalion of 24 vehicles "at the disposal of the commander of the 43rd rifle division", a tank compar

19th Rifle Corps", 15 tanks in the fighter squads (i.e. paramilitary formations from the NKVD and local residents). In addition to the obvious

decrease in the striking power of the mechanized corps, there is another, less obvious, moment in this use of tanks. The tank (any tank - German, Soviet,

English) of that era was a very capricious, unreliable and low-resource technical device. Suffice it to say that the TBO for the BT-7 tank was set at 200 hours, for the T-26 - at 150 hours. The minimum operating conditions necessary for the combat use of tanks could only be created within the framework of a large formation with a powerful own repair and evacuation base. And what kind of maintenance, what repair can we talk about in relation to the equipment and capabilities of the NKVD fighter detachment or even the rifle division, most of whose fighters had not seen either rails or a steam locomotive before being drafted into the army? As a result, after the first slight failure, the 10-ton expensive colossus was simply thrown into an open field.

Further more. The general offensive of the Finnish "Karelian Army" on the Onega-Ladoga Isthmus began

only on July 10, 1941. But a few days before the start of full-scale hostilities, the Finnish command, apparently, decided to conduct reconnaissance in battle in the Sortavala direction. At the headquarters of the 23rd Army, this caused a great commotion. Already on the evening of July 2, the headquarters of the 21st TD, along with the order to launch an

offensive on Imatra, received an order to send the 41st tank regiment of this division by rail to the Sortaval direction, to the Elisenvaara station area, while the tank regiment was loaded into the echelon ... 30 minutes! The only thing that facilitated the loading in such an unrealistic time frame was that after all the previous "regroupings" in the 41st tank regiment, which had not yet fired a single shot at the enemy, only 41 tanks remained. It was in this composition that he was sent to Elisenvaara. The next day, July 4, the entire 198th motorized rifle regiment was transferred to the Sortaval direction.

division from the 10th MK. After that, the offensive of the 10th mechanized corps on Imatra could be completely forgotten.

It is worth noting that such a hysterical state, in which the command of the 23rd Army came after the very first reports of the advanced Finnish detachments crossing the border, very clearly indicates that no one has ever prepared to "repel the onslaught of the enemy" on the Northern Front. The troops did not even have topographic maps of their own territory. We find eloquent confirmation of this in the memoirs of Golushko:

"... in front of the battalion commander was a diagram-map, probably intended for tourists or motorists ... there was nothing else at the disposal of the battalion commander. The unit left the area for which there was a military topographic map a long time ago..." [9] no further than 60 km from the Soviet-Finnish border! On the same ill-fated day, July 4, 1941, the commander of the 23rd Army, Lieutenant General Pshennikov, ordered the creation of an "Army Tank Group" not provided for by any charters, for which

the 10th mechanized corps was finally dismantled: from the 21st TD they took 54 tanks, from the 24th TD - 102 tanks (though mainly outdated BT-2) [8]. Such activity, shown by the command of the 23rd Army on July 4, had a simple explanation. It was on this day that the General Staff of the Red Army finally received an order to withdraw the 10th MK from the 23rd Army and relocate

this mechanized corps to the southwestern approaches to Leningrad, to the German front [8]. Contrary to widespread rumors that "there was order in the country under Stalin," the lieutenant general did not allow General of the Army Zhukov to "burrow" the mechanized corps from him (Pshennikov) in its entirety and "earned" almost half of the tanks of the 10th mechanized corps. During the multi-day return march from the Finnish border to the defensive line on the Luga River (more than 250 km), some of the remaining tanks in the corps broke down. As a result, on July 9, it was

decided to consolidate the 90 most serviceable tanks into one consolidated tank regiment, and



the remaining 98 tanks were distributed among rifle units. On this, the history of the 10th MK practically ended ... Even

earlier, on June 29, 1941, the Chief of the General Staff G.K. Zhukov ordered the withdrawal of the 1st MK from the Northern Front and transfer it to the command of the North-Western Front [5]. Huge tank columns again set off - this time exactly back, from Gatchina to Ostrov. The 163rd motorized division went even further west, to the Latvian city of Rezekne (160 km from Pskov), where on July 3 it was crushed and defeated by German tanks from the Manstein corps.

After the main strike forces of the Northern Front left the Finnish border to the west, and the front's aviation left the skies of Karelia, being finally redirected to fight the German divisions advancing on Pskov and Leningrad, on July 10, 1941, the offensive of the Finnish army began on the Onega-Ladoga isthmus.

As you know, Comrade Stalin had a very low estimate of the offensive capabilities of the Finnish army. So, speaking on April 17, 1940 at a meeting of the commanding staff of the Red Army, the great leader and teacher said verbatim the following:

“... the Finnish army is very passive in defense ... Fools, they sit in the pillboxes and don't come out, they think that they can't cope with the pillboxes, they sit and drink tea ... But the Finnish offensive is not worth a penny. For 3 months of fighting, do you remember at least one case of a serious mass offensive by the Finnish army? [140]

It is difficult to understand whom Comrade Stalin wanted to fool - himself or his listeners - when he ridiculed the Finnish army for not launching a counteroffensive against a tenfold superior enemy. But in the summer of 1941, when the forces of the parties were approximately equal, the Finns themselves did not drink tea, and they did not give others.

Under the proven leadership of the “decrepit Mannerheim, pulled out of mothballs” (an old general of the tsarist army, who served the Russian Empire faithfully for 30 years, a participant in the Russian-Japanese and World Wars I), Finnish troops occupied the entire Onega-Ladoga isthmus and in early September reached the line connecting these two lakes of the Svir River. On September 30, the Finns captured Petrozavodsk, the capital of Karelian-Finnish (yes, that's right, with

with an eye on a better future, renamed it on March 31, 1940) an autonomous "republic". The Finns also decided to "keep up" in renaming, and Petrozavodsk became Eevislinna...

The Finnish offensive on the Karelian Isthmus began even later, only on July 31, 1941. Five

days later, Pshennikov was removed from the post of commander, but this did not help either. The reinforced concrete pillboxes of the Sortavalsky, Keksgolmsky and Vyborgsky fortified areas did not help either. By the end of the summer, the Finnish army reached the line of the old border that existed on the Karelian Isthmus before the "winter war" of 1939. At the same time, the 43rd, 115th and 123rd rifle divisions of the 23rd army were surrounded and defeated in the Vyborg region, and the commander of the 43rd Rifle Division, Major General V.V. Kirpichnikov ended up in Finnish captivity (on June 28, 1950, he was shot for "losing control of the troops, giving the Finns secret information about the Soviet troops, slandering the Soviet system and praising the Finnish army", in June 1957 -

rehabilitated posthumously) [20, p.116, VIZH, 1992, No. 12]. Despite the fact that the pace of the enemy's offensive was very low (neither the terrain features nor the technical equipment of the Finnish infantry army allowed it to cut the front with tank "wedges" according to the German

model), 64,188 people were captured by the Finns [31, 32].

This is the strength of five rifle divisions of the Red Army. The heavy equipment and weapons of the 23rd Army were almost completely lost. So, published in 1993 by the General Staff (now the Russian Army), the statistical collection "Secret Classification Removed" reports that until October 10, 1941, Soviet troops in Karelia and on the Kola Peninsula lost 546 tanks [35]. This figure even exceeds the total number of tanks left at the disposal of the command of the Northern Front after the redeployment of the 10th mechanized corps and the 1st tank division of the 1st mechanized corps to the German front. A possible explanation for this arithmetic "inconsistency" is that in the rear of the Northern Front, the huge Kirov Plant in Leningrad worked (and sent new

Somewhat digressing from the main topic, we note that in only three strategic operations that took place on the northern flank of the war (Baltic, Karelian and Leningrad), during the period from June 22 to

On October 10, 1941, the Red Army lost (according to data from the same collection) 4561 tanks [35, p. 368]. Which is seven and a half times greater than the initial strength of the 4th Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht, which operated as part of Army Group North in the North-West direction. At the

end of August 1941, Keitel sent a letter to Mannerheim, in which he proposed that the Finns, together with the Wehrmacht, take Leningrad by storm. At the same time, the Finns were asked to continue the offensive south of the Svir River in order to connect with the Germans advancing on Tikhvin. But on August 28, Finnish President Ryti and Commander-in-Chief Mannerheim answered these proposals with a categorical refusal. After that, on September 4, 1941, the Chief of the General Staff of the German Armed Forces, General Jodl, was sent to Mannerheim's headquarters as a "chief-persuader", but the result was the same [34]. The Finns took what they considered theirs and did not take a step further.

It is customary to say that "history does not know the subjunctive mood." In vain they say. The analysis of unrealized alternatives very often allows us to more accurately and deeply understand the essence of what actually

happened. In real history, the Finnish army returned to the 1939 border line (and beyond this line on the Onega-Ladoga Isthmus) as a result of a bloody war. And everything could be completely different. So, what could the Soviet Union gain and what would it lose if it itself, with a broad "gesture of good will", returned to Finland these territories seized during the "winter war"? The economic

significance of these areas is quite small - Russia already has enough forests and cranberries. We

will not discuss such categories as "authority on the world stage" or "public opinion". There is no subject for discussion. The authority was such that by that time the USSR had already been expelled from the League of Nations - and precisely because of the aggression against Finland. The only ally of the Union throughout the world was the fraternal Mongolia (long ago turned into a Soviet protectorate). As for "public opinion," it was exceptionally accommodating in the Stalinist empire.

We can only discuss the military-political consequences of such a decision. In reality, Social Democratic Finland agreed to an unnatural alliance with Nazi Germany, as they say, "not from a good life." And not right away. So, as early as June 10, 1941, Mannerheim told Colonel Buschenhagen of the German General Staff who arrived in Helsinki that Finland wanted to stay away from the Soviet-German war. On June 22, 1941, after the war between Germany and the USSR had become a *fait accompli*, the Finnish Foreign Ministry officially announced that Finland intended to remain neutral. Moreover, at the request of the Finnish side, Ribbentrop was forced to publicly disavow the deliberately false fabrications of Hitler, who, in his radio speech on June 22, threw the phrase that "Finnish and German soldiers stand shoulder to shoulder." By June 24, 1941, the USSR, England, Sweden and, very importantly, Germany declared their recognition of the neutral status of Finland! With a probability close to 100%, it can be assumed that if the

Soviet Union (perhaps through the mediation of its new, unexpected allies - the United States and the British Empire) offered Finland some kind of compromise solution to the territorial issue, then a new Soviet-Finnish war could have been avoided. The results of such a turn of events would be gigantic.

Firstly, huge forces could be transferred to the Baltic States (and transferred in advance; without waiting for the defeat of the North-Western Front): two mechanized corps, fifteen rifle divisions, numerous aviation and artillery units of the Leningrad Military District.

In general, the grouping of Soviet troops in the Baltic could be almost doubled. Later, in

July-August 1941, those reserves that in real history had to be sent to Karelia could be sent to the German front (and not to the front of the Finnish war that no one needed). Namely: 88, 265, 272, 291, 314th rifle divisions, 3rd Leningrad division of the people's militia, many separate regiments of the NKVD and marines [30]. Could the Germans in this case reach the suburbs of Leningrad?

Secondly, with any development of the defensive operation on the southwestern approaches to Leningrad, even with such a catastrophic one that actually took place, the blockade of Leningrad would be absolutely impossible.

Leningrad is NOT located on a peninsula. In principle, it cannot be blocked "on the one hand". Having Finland as - no, not an ally, but only a neutral neighbor, Leningrad could be supplied for an arbitrarily long time by rail through Petrozavodsk - Sortavala. Even if the Germans were able to go another 250 km through forests and swamps from Tikhvin to Petrozavodsk (which they failed to do in real history), then in this case it would be impossible to suffocate Leningrad with hunger: the main ally of the USSR is rich and extremely generous at that time. moment America would pay the Finns for food supplies for Leningrad. As a last resort, she would bring her products through the ports of neutral Finland and Sweden. Of course, the sea route in the conditions of war is extremely unreliable - but after

all, more than 5 million tons of all good things were brought to Murmansk by sea convoys of the allies. And in order to save two million Leningraders from starvation, one million tons of carcass (or the American egg powder so memorable to veterans) would be more than enough.

Thirdly, if there was an uninterrupted railway connection with the "mainland", the most powerful tank, artillery, and aviation plants in Leningrad could work properly for the front and for victory. The whole war. Who will calculate how many soldiers' lives could be saved by this? Yes, it was expensive, very expensive for the Soviet people

adventure with "the liberation of the Finnish brothers from the yoke of capital" ...

## **First Marshal**

As you probably already guessed, the planned campaign of the 1st Panzer Division to the shores of the Gulf of Bothnia did not take place. The Germans interfered. On June 29, 1941, a separate mountain ranger corps of the Wehrmacht under the command of General Edward Dietl launched an offensive against Murmansk from the territory of occupied Norway.

It was an elite formation of the Wehrmacht, specially trained and equipped for combat operations in the Far North. In the spring of 1940, it was Dietl's mountain rangers who played a decisive role in the battles with the British during the invasion of Norway. Despite the relatively small number (two divisions, 28 thousand personnel), Dietl's corps had to solve a problem of strategic importance: by capturing Murmansk and the polar section of the Kirov railway, deprive the Soviet Union of access to ice-free ports.

Two days later, on July 1, 1941, the 36th Army Corps, as part of the 169th Infantry Division and the SS Nord Division, launched an offensive against Kandalaksha. The task of this formation of the Wehrmacht was access to the railway in order to cut off the units of the 14th Army and the Northern Fleet defending Murmansk from the rest of the country.

The war plan is tied to the roads - especially when it comes to fighting in the polar forest-tundra. That is why the deployment area of the 36th German Corps turned out to be just on the line of the Rovaniemi-Salla road (along which the 1st Panzer Division of the 1st Mechanized Corps was supposed to break into Finland). For this mistake, for the neglect of the enemy and the ugly work of intelligence, the Germans had to immediately pay. Even in extremely unfavorable conditions, on completely "anti-tank" terrain, the 1st Panzer confirmed its reputation as the first. In the presentation of a modern Finnish historian (very, by

the way, sympathetic to the former allies of Finland), these events look like this:

"... the SS Nord division operating on the southern flank turned out to be unable to advance due to the completely insufficient level of combat training and the significant weakness of the leadership on the part of SS officers. After the first battles, the division was even put to flight, rushed back and could not support the 169th Infantry Division ... "The tankers of General Baranov

apparently "attached" to them if the SS somehow lost their "combat training", and the traditional German habit of obeying commanders ...

Failed to develop success. The calendar was already July 41st, and the Chief of the General Staff Zhukov demanded that the 1st TD be immediately loaded into railway trains and sent back to where it came from - to the southern approaches to Leningrad. (Let's note in parentheses that this order, which arrived at the headquarters of the 14th Army on July 4 - at the very beginning of the battle for Murmansk - once again confirms our assumption that the pre-war redeployment of Baranov's division in the Arctic was connected with anything, but only not with plans to repel the German

invasion.) And in this case, the relationship between the Soviet generals immediately turned into a "hazing form." Commander of the 14th Army, Lieutenant General V.A. Frolov was by no means in a hurry to carry out the order of the General Staff, and the 1st Panzer continued to fight in the Arctic until mid-

July. Let's not rush to judge. Each general had his own truth. Zhukov, who was responsible for the defense of the entire country, was well aware of the catastrophic consequences - militarily, economically, politically - that the capture of Leningrad by the Germans could have. Therefore, the General Staff was in a hurry to create some kind of front of defense to the east of Pskov and

Narva by any means. And General Frolov had his own truth. He had no doubt that there would not be a second such case, and that Stavka would never send a full-fledged tank division to him on the Kola Peninsula again, which is why he hurried to make the most of the favorable combination of circumstances.

From the standpoint of today's knowledge, this dramatic dispute is even more difficult to resolve. In July 1941, Zhukov, of course, could not imagine that the "Anglo-American imperialists" would send 17 million tons of military cargo to help Stalin. But in reality, during the three long years of the war, the needs of the Red Army and the defense industry for such important items as aviation gasoline, explosives, aluminum, cars and tires, trains, locomotives and rails, communications, antibiotics, were covered mainly by assistance from worst enemies of communism. In connection with such an incredible turn of events, the defense of Murmansk and the railway to it turned into

a strategic task of no less importance than the defense of Leningrad and Moscow, the oil fields of Baku and Grozny.

It would not be superfluous to note that in the summer of 1941, it was General Frolov's 14th Army that turned out to be the only army on the entire front from the Black Sea to the Barents Sea that completed its task. The enemy offensive was stopped in

the border zone, the Germans were not allowed to break through to Murmansk and the Kirov railway, while Dittl's elite corps suffered huge (more than 50%) losses in personnel. In mid-October 1941, the remnants of the 2nd and 3rd mountain chasseur divisions of the Wehrmacht were withdrawn from the Kola Peninsula to the rear for reorganization. Alas, almost no one remembers this today, and V.A. Frolov was not even

awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union - a completely unusual situation for the commander of the Great Patriotic War with the rank of colonel general. Let us return, however, from the heights of grand strategy to the tragic events of July 1941. The confusion in management

ended with the fact that in fact none of the options for using the 1st TD as a large strike formation

was implemented. The command of the allegedly "offensive" Red Army did not dare to organize a counteroffensive, and the 1st tank, as well as the entire 10th mechanized corps of the 23rd army, were "torn apart by

parts."

A motorized rifle regiment and one tank battalion from the 1st Tank Regiment remained to fight in the Kandalaksha direction as part of the 14th Army. In addition, the fifty tanks allocated to the commander of the 42nd Rifle Corps of the 14th Army in August 1941 were reduced to a separate tank battalion, which successfully fought the Germans until 1943 [8]. In the meantime, the Headquarters again demanded (Directive

No. 00329 of July 14) "the tank division from the Kandalaksha region should immediately be transferred to Leningrad" [5]. And finally, on July 17, 1941, exactly one month after the "peaceful" June morning the division was raised on combat alert, the echelons from the 1st Panzer moved back, south - towards Leningrad.



But this time they were not destined to reach the front of the war with

Germany. On July 10, 1941, the Headquarters (i.e., Comrade Stalin) created the High Command of the North-Western Direction, which was headed by Marshal of the Soviet Union, member of the Politburo of the CPSU (b), Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, one of the five members of the State Defense Committee (the highest

body of state power of that period) Klim Voroshilov. Comrade Voroshilov fought all his life against the landowners and capitalists. But there was, as the Americans say, "nothing personal" in his hostility to the world of capital. It was hatred on command. By order, she could at any

moment be replaced by a strong military friendship. In August 1939, People's Commissar Voroshilov is negotiating with the English lord, Sir Reginald Drax, Admiral of the English Navy, and the French General Dumenck about a military alliance against Hitler. In September of the same 1939, People's Commissar Voroshilov, together with Hitler's General Köstring, discussed issues of interaction between the Wehrmacht and

the Red Army in the defeat and occupation of Poland. By the end of World War II, Voroshilov completely turns into something like a high-ranking "military diplomat." Stalin takes him to Tehran to meet with Roosevelt and Churchill, instructs him to negotiate peace with Hungary and Romania, to receive a French military delegation in Moscow headed by General de Gaulle, etc.

But Comrade Voroshilov had a real, genuine hatred for the "White-Finnish Mannerheim gangs". The ringing, weighty slaps in the face that the Finnish army hung in the winter of 1939/40 on the "first red officer" continued to burn on Voroshilov's cheeks. In addition, the case then was not at all limited to metaphorical "slaps in the face". After the Red Army suffered more losses in the war with the "Finland booger" than the losses of the Wehrmacht during the occupation of half of Europe, on May 8, 1940, Stalin expelled Voroshilov from the post of people's commissar. And he didn't just kick him out, but gave him to sign the top secret "Act on the reception of the People's Commissariat of Defense of the USSR Comrade. Timoshenko from comrade. Voroshilov" [42].

In this amazing document, two dozen areas of work of the defense department were listed, for each of which "exceptional neglect" and the replacement of the case with "paper reports" were stated. True, Voroshilov was left with both the title and membership, but the paper stating that he ruined the country's defenses as carefully and comprehensively as he could not ruin it and an enemy agent who made his way to the Kremlin lay "on sidings." And Klim Efremovich knew about this and always remembered. The desire

to "teach the presumptuous Finnish warriors a lesson" and thereby restore his reputation as a wise commander led Marshal Voroshilov to Karelia on the 20th of July 1941. You can appreciate this visit only if you remember what happened these days on the southwestern approaches to Leningrad

By the end of June 1941, Army Group North had crossed the Western Dvina all the way from Daugavpils to Riga. Breaking into the operational space, the Germans on July 6, after a two-day fierce battle with the 3rd Panzer Division of the 1st MK, occupied the city of Ostrov. On July 9, practically without a fight, on the shoulders of the panicked 118th and 111th divisions, the Germans entered Pskov. July 10 G.K. Zhukov, on behalf of the Headquarters, sends the command of the North-Western Front (already on July 4, the former commander was removed and Major General P.P. Sobennikov took command of the front) the following directive: "... commanders who do not follow your orders and abandon positions like traitors, have not yet been punished ... as a result of the inaction of the commanders of the North-Western Front, they are constantly rolling back ... The commander, a member of the Military Council, the prosecutor and the head of the 3rd Front Directorate, immediately leave for the advanced units and deal with cowards on the spot and traitors, to organize active actions on the spot to exterminate the Germans, to persecute and destroy them..." [5, p. 62]

Alas, it was not possible to deal with all the cowards and traitors - in mid-July 1941, the fighting was already going on a hundred kilometers from Leningrad. Divisions of the people's militia were sent to hold the front along the Luga River. Poorly armed, almost untrained, recruited from students and teachers of Leningrad universities who never held weapons in their hands, the militia died on the Luga line. Future died, so forever remained unknown scientists, poets,

artists, the creative elite of the nation perished - in order to delay the onslaught of the enemy for several days, to give the command time to transfer reserves.

Concerned about this practically the first disruption in the implementation of his plans since the beginning of the war, Hitler personally arrived on July 21 at the headquarters of Army Group North and

demanding that Leeb take Leningrad as soon as possible. It was on this day that Voroshilov, with his power, stopped the echelons going to Leningrad and ordered to unload the main of the remaining forces of the 1st TD (namely: the 2nd Tank Regiment, consisting of 4 KB, 13 T-28, 29 BT-7, 57 BT -5, 32 T-26 and 19 armored vehicles) in the forests near Vedlozero, 70-80 km west of Petrozavodsk [8]. Together with two

motorized rifle regiments of the NKVD, they were supposed to counterattack and defeat the Finns. The absurdity of

this decision lies not even in the fact that Leningrad and Petrozavodsk had different weights on the scales of the war. Unfortunately, Marshal Voroshilov never understood that a light tank division was not a magic wand, but a tool. A tool suitable only for a very specific job. The same one that in the wars of the last century was carried out by the Cossack horse lava: to drive and cut down the fleeing, to seize headquarters and warehouses, to burn carts in the rear of the enemy paralyzed by fear. In other words, to solve the same tasks that the divisions of the 4th and 3rd Panzer Groups of the Wehrmacht in the northwestern direction completed in June 1941.

In parentheses, we note that they were no better armed: out of 1544 tanks with which the 4th and 3rd tank groups began the eastern campaign, 1237 (80%) were light tanks PZ-I, PZ-II, captured Czech PZ-38(t) with bulletproof armor and much weaker (in comparison with our T-26 and BT) weapons.

And on the terrain with such names as Mashozero, Kroshnozero, Kukkozero, Vedlozero, among dense coniferous forests, swamps and lakes of Karelia, Baranov's tank division was doomed. The desperately fighting Finns from the 1st Infantry Division of Colonel Paalu, during fierce battles on July 23-27, stopped the advance of the Red Army. Judging by the reports of the commanders of the 1st TD, the motorized Chekists retreated after the very first shots, and the Finnish infantry

shot our tanks from forest ambushes, mined roads rare in these places, and bottles of gasoline and heavy bombs were used.

Commander-in-Chief Voroshilov himself, of course, did not wait for the final results of his command. He soon returned to Leningrad, where he gave one of his most famous orders - the manufacture of several tens of thousands of steel spearheads, with which the first marshal was going to slaughter the Fritz when they break into the city of Lenin ...

On August 10, the command of the Petrozavodsk Operational Group, reinforced by the 272nd Infantry Division from the Stavka reserve, tried to re-organize the offensive - but the result was the same. The Soviet command was never able to use tanks massively, with shock groups. Separate platoons and companies of the tank regiment were scattered over the vast expanse of eastern Karelia. There have been cases of using 50-ton KB for the delivery of reports, as a courier motorcycle. Many tanks, due to the lack of gasoline, diesel fuel and spare parts in the forest wilderness, had to be buried in the ground and used as fixed firing points, or even simply abandoned. At the end of the month, the few tankers who survived this forest battle on foot, with the remnants of units of the 7th Army, withdrew to Petrozavodsk [8].

This is how the first of a long series of failed counterattacks by the Red Army in the summer of 1941 ended. Today, few people remember the tragedy of the second Soviet-Finnish war. Only the tanks bogged down in the Karelian swamps and the yellowed funerals—many, many funerals, tens of thousands—remain mute witnesses to that unnecessary war lost in the dark waters of Soviet history.

Of course, it cannot be denied that the German offensive in the Baltic states and the rapid exit of the 4th Wehrmacht Panzer Group to the southwestern approaches to Leningrad mixed up all the plans of the Soviet command. The invasion of Finland had to be stopped at the very beginning, on the run. On the other hand, judging by HOW the Soviet offensive began, what “successes” were achieved by the 1st and 10th mechanized corps during the time that the Wehrmacht had enough to rush from the border to Pskov, it's hard enough to believe that SUCH an army could drive and smash the Germans, force the full-flowing Vistula and Oder, conquer Europe ...

Here, dear reader, you have the right to be indignant. What kind of conversation is this: "it's hard to believe"? What is it with us - a theatrical review or a study on military history?

The criticism is justified. In the following parts of our story, we will talk about the directions of the main attack, about those offensive attempts, the development of which no one (except the enemy) hindered.

## Part 2

### Intention

On the evening of June 22, 1941, and to be exact, at 21:15, People's Commissar of Defense Timoshenko approved and sent Directive No. 3 to the command of the western districts (fronts) for execution. This document gave a brief assessment of the enemy grouping and plans: "... the enemy delivers the main blows from the Suwalki ledge to Alytus and from the Zamosc region to the front Vladimir Volynsky, Radzekhov, auxiliary blows in the directions of Tilsit - Siauliai and Sedlec - Volkovysk ..." - and the immediate tasks were set for June 23-24: "encircle and destroy the enemy's Suwalki grouping with concentric concentrated strikes by the troops of the North-Western and Western Fronts and capture the Suwalki area by the end of June 24; with powerful concentric strikes by mechanized corps, all aviation of the Southwestern Front and other troops of the 5th and 6th armies, encircle and destroy the enemy grouping advancing in the direction of Vladimir-Volynsky, Brody. By the end of June 24, capture the Lublin region.

In parentheses, we note that this document alone allows us to draw a reasonable conclusion about the worth of the many years of boasting of the glorious "Chekists" that the documents of the German command lay on Stalin's table half an hour earlier than on Hitler's table.

In the six months that have passed since Hitler signed the Barbarossa plan, the Soviet military leadership never learned that the Wehrmacht's most powerful blow would be delivered by the forces of Guderian's 2nd Panzer Group along the Brest-Slutsk-Minsk line. This direction is not mentioned in Directive No. 3 even as an auxiliary one. And what our command regarded as an "auxiliary strike in the direction of Tilsit - Siauliai" was in fact the beginning of the offensive of the main forces of Army Group North on Leningrad.

In reality, the joint actions of the North-Western and Western fronts did not take place. The main striking forces of the North

Western Front: The 12th mechanized corps of Major General Shestopalov and the 3rd (without the 5th Panzer Division) mechanized corps of Major General Kurkin were redirected not to the southwest, in the direction of Kaunas - Suwalki (as was prescribed by Directive No. 3), and to the northwest, in the direction of Siauliai, where on June 24 a major tank battle took place with the main forces of the 4th tank group of the Wehrmacht. As for the 5th TD (3rd MK), it was already defeated in the morning of June 23 in the Alytus region and practically did not participate in further hostilities of the front. Thus, a two-sided attack on the Suwalki grouping of the Germans turned into an offensive by the right wing of the

Western Front alone. The circumstances and causes of the defeat that ended this offensive, we will consider in this part of our

storytelling.

By the time Directive No. 3 was received and deciphered at the headquarters of the Western Front, the military situation

changed qualitatively.

The Germans crossed the Neman. More precisely, they did not force it, but moved it along three unexploded bridges near Alytus and Merkinė. "Following the retreating units of the Soviet troops," writes our chief specialist in the initial period of the war, Comrade Anfilov, "German tanks also slipped over the bridges across the Neman." We slipped through in the amount of three (7, 20, 12th) tank divisions. By the end of the day on June 22, 1941, the advanced units of the 3rd Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht advanced 60-70 km deep into Soviet territory and rushed to Vilnius. But no matter how strong the offensive impulse of the Germans, no matter how weak the resistance of the troops of the 11th Army of the North-Western Front, roads and bridges have a very definite capacity, and tanks in columns move at intervals of several tens of meters. As a result, when the 7th Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht occupied Vilnius on the morning of June 24, and the 20th and 12th Panzer Divisions approached Oshmyany, the rearguard of the Panzer Group - the 19th Panzer and 14th Motorized Divisions were just crossing the Neman [ 13]. Thus, what military historians usually call the "German tank wedge" in those days consisted of several "strands of steel" stretching for 100-120 km along the roads of western Lithuania. Wherein

the German infantry, walking in the truest sense of the word on foot, with their horse-drawn carts and horse-drawn artillery, was just beginning to build pontoon crossings across the Neman.

The charter requires that a subordinate of any rank and rank, with the unconditional fulfillment of the task assigned to him by a higher commander, should show reasonable initiative in choosing the most effective ways and methods of fulfilling an order. This is exactly how the commander of the Western Front, Hero of the Soviet Union, holder of three Orders of Lenin and two Orders of the Red Star, General of the Army D.G. Pavlov. At 11:40 p.m. on June 22, he ordered his deputy, Lieutenant General Boldin (by this time who had already arrived from Minsk to Bialystok, at the headquarters of the most powerful, 10th Army of the Western Front), to organize a strike group as part of the 6th mechanized corps, 11th mechanized corps, 6th cavalry corps and "strike in the general direction of Bialystok - Lipsk, south of Grodno with the task of destroying the enemy on the left (i.e. western. - M.S.) bank of the river. Neman ... by the end of June 24, 41, capture Merkina.

As you can see, Pavlov (having moved away from directly following the "letter" of Directive No. 3) turned the spearhead of the offensive from the north-western direction (from Grodno to Suwalki) directly to the north, along the western bank of the Neman, from Grodno to Merkin. The concept of the operation was ingeniously simple. A swift (two days in time and 80-90 km in space) strike on the flank and rear of the enemy infantry advancing to the west, the capture of bridges and crossings over the Neman - and the mousetrap into which the 3rd Wehrmacht Panzer Group drove itself shuts itself. Cut off from all supply lines, deprived of the support of their own infantry, the German tank divisions that broke through to Vilnius are surrounded and destroyed.

In parentheses, we note that eleven months later, in May 1942, exactly the same operation was carried out by the Germans. Then, in the course of the infamous Kharkov offensive operation, Soviet troops crossed the Seversky Donets and reached the suburbs of Kharkov. Meanwhile, the German tank army of Kleist crossed the same river near the city of Izyum (100 km south of Kharkov) and, moving north along the eastern, practically undefended bank of the Seversky



Donets, cut off the communications of the Soviet troops, who ended up in the "cauldron" on the western bank of the Donets.

The result was the encirclement and defeat of five Soviet armies, while more than 200 thousand soldiers and commanders of the Red Army were captured by the Germans. The operation conceived by Pavlov could not have ended with such a large-scale success - simply because the German 3rd Panzer Group did not have 200, or even 100 thousand people. But in all other respects, the offensive of the shock group of the Western Front was, as they say, "doomed to success."

## **Destined to succeed**

Thanks to the prudently drawn in September 1939 "the line of delimitation of the state interests of the USSR and Germany on the territory of the former Polish state" [70], the Bialystok group of Soviet troops, without firing a single shot, was already hanging over the flank and rear of the German troops, squeezed in a close "

patch" of the Suwalki ledge. Stalin took care of this. And nature (or the Lord God himself) made sure that the Neman River turned 90 degrees near Grodno, thus "freeing" the way for Soviet tanks advancing from Bialystok to Merkin. There are simply no other large rivers that the defending German infantry could cling to in this area.

Due to the fact that Pavlov abandoned the attack on the city of Suwalki, occupied by the Germans in 1939, and decided to encircle and destroy the enemy's Suwalki grouping on Soviet territory, the Germans were deprived of the opportunity to rely on anti-tank defense prepared in advance in the engineering sense. It is clear that in the area that the Germans occupied a day or two ago, they still did not have and could not have either minefields, or anti-tank ditches, or reinforced concrete pillboxes. The strike

force of General Boldin (according to the military terminology adopted in the Red Army, it was a "horse-mechanized group", abbreviated as KMG) included: four tank, two mechanized divisions, as well as a cavalry corps corresponding in size to one "settlement division", which had armed with at least 1310 tanks and 370 cannon

armored vehicles, a total of 1680 armored vehicles [78], more than six thousand cars and three hundred tractors. In addition, on June 23, the 124th howitzer regiment of the High Command reserve, consisting of 48 heavy guns, was included in the Boldin group for artillery support of the

offensive. We emphasize once again that these are the minimum figures found in the literature. If you believe the data of the monograph "1941 - Lessons and Conclusions" (issued in 1992 by the General Staff of the Joint Armed Forces of the CIS), then the number of tanks in Boldin's KMG divisions was 1597 units [3], which is more than one and a half times higher than the number of the largest tank

Wehrmacht groups! It is also very significant to compare the composition of KMG Boldin with the strength of the Soviet tank armies of the final period of the Great Patriotic War. So, on the eve of the largest Vistula-Oder operation in January 45, there were only 680 tanks and self-propelled guns in the 4th tank army of Lelyushenko, in the 2nd Guards tank army on the eve of the assault on Berlin, April 15, 1945, there were 685 armored vehicles, including armored cars and self-propelled guns, in the 5th Guards Tank Army before the start of the East Prussian operation (January 45), there were only 590 tanks

and self-propelled guns [22]. As you can see, none of the Soviet tank armies that completed "the defeat of the fascist beast in its lair" in 1945 had even half of the amount of armored vehicles that was made available to General Boldin in June 1941! All this

giant steel armada was supposed to fall on five infantry divisions of the Wehrmacht: 162 infantry divisions and 256 infantry divisions from the 20th army corps and 8 infantry divisions, 28 infantry divisions and 161 infantry divisions from the 8th army corps. Moreover, in reality, by the morning of June 24, in the area of the planned counterattack by KMG Boldin, there were only two infantry divisions of the 20th Army Corps, and three divisions of the 8th Army Corps had already crossed the Neman River and were advancing in the strip from Grodno to Druskininkai in the general direction of the city of Lida, advancing to the east by three almost parallel routes [61, 78]. Thus, during its advance to the north from Grodno on Merkin, KMG had a unique opportunity to

destroy the enemy in parts with a series of successive strikes to the flank and rear. In other words, in those first days of the war, a situation will arise exact

pre-war calculations of the Soviet command: "... in terms of its capabilities - in terms of armament, manpower, strike power - the tank corps corresponds to five German infantry divisions. And if so, then we have the right and the obligation to entrust the tank corps with the task of destroying 1-2 tank divisions or 4-5 infantry divisions. Why do I say 4-5 with such confidence? Only because a tank corps in its scope will never fight

simultaneously with these five divisions that have deployed and sent fire weapons against it. Apparently, he will destroy these 5 divisions in a series of blows one after another ... "[14] These are excerpts from the report" The use of mechanized formations in a modern offensive operation, "with which

General of the Army Pavlov (at that time the head of the Main Armored Directorate The Red Army, i.e. "Chief Tankman" of the Red Army) spoke at the famous December (1940) meeting of the highest command staff of the Red Army.

Let us recall once again that in terms of the number of tanks and personnel of KMG Boldin, about one and a half times, it exceeded the mechanized corps (or "tank corps", as Pavlov calls it in his report), and in artillery - twice.

So it was with quantity. Now let's try to evaluate quality.

The main striking force of the KMG, and of the entire Western Front as a whole, was the 6th mechanized corps of Major General M.G. Khatskilevich. As you know, most of the mechanized corps of the Red Army before the start of the war did not manage to receive even half of the equipment required by the state. All the more impressive against this background is the situation in the 6th mechanized corps, which already in mid-June had more tanks than planned for the end of 1941! The special, elite status of the 6th MK is also evidenced by the presence in its arsenal of a significant number of the latest at that time - certainly the best in the world - T-34 and KV tanks. Most sources give the figure of 352 new types of tanks (114 KB and 238 T-34). If these figures are correct, then the 6th MK occupied the "second place" among all the mechanized corps of the Red Army, yielding in this indicator only to the 4th MK Vlasov, which included 416 tanks of new types. If you believe the data of the monograph "1941 - less

conclusions", then the 6th MK had 452 newest tanks by the beginning of the war, which brings this mechanized corps to the undisputed "first place" in the entire

Red Army! There is a very simple explanation for such a discrepancy in figures (given by the authors with references to the funds of declassified military archives). Reporting in the Red Army - like in thousands of other institutions - was carried out as of the first day of each month. The smaller numbers are probably taken from the reports for June 1, 1941. But after all, on the first of June, the round-the-clock work of Soviet military factories did not stop at all, and the shipment of the latest tanks from the factories to the troops continued until June 22, and all subsequent days. It is all the more significant that out of 138 T-34 tanks transferred by industry to the troops from June 1 to June 22, 1941, 114 were sent to

Bialystok (i.e., to the 6th mechanized corps) [8]. However, let's not forget that the mechanized corps is not only tanks. To ensure the well-coordinated combat work of tank, motorized rifle and artillery units, uninterrupted supply of ammunition and fuel, many thousands of vehicles and tractors (artillery tractors) were required. To be precise, according to the state, the mechanized corps was supposed to have 352 tractors and 5165 cars.

There were then big problems with this "materiel" in the Red Army. There weren't enough cars anywhere. It was supposed to bring the staffing of units and formations to the standard only after carrying out open mobilization, by transferring 300 thousand cars and 50 thousand tractors from the national economy to the army. As a result of the "contingency situation" that occurred on June 22, 1941, most of the mechanized corps entered the war with a significant (up to 50-60%) shortage of vehicles. But in this matter, the 6th MK was in the lead. There were 294 tractors in the corps (an honorable "second place" among all mechanized corps of the Red Army), and in terms of the number of cars and motorcycles (4779 and 1042, respectively), the 6th MK surpassed any other mechanized corps. These data are taken from the books of modern historians [1, 3]. The commander of the corps, Major General Khatskilevich, at the December (1940) meeting of the command staff of the Red Army, cited much larger numbers:

necessary for life and combat), and then we have 6800 vehicles going into the breakthrough, almost 7000 ... "

All this (and the very fact of the speech of the corps commander at a meeting of the highest command staff, in the presence of the people's commissar of defense and the commanders of the districts) very eloquently testifies to the role and place of the 6th MK in the pre-war plans of the Soviet command.

By the way, about the place. From the summer of 1940 until the start of the war, this one of the most powerful mechanized corps of the Red Army hid in the wilds of reserved forests east of Bialystok. He hid so carefully that the vaunted German air reconnaissance could not even establish the very fact of his presence. The morning summary of the headquarters of the 9th Army (Army Group Center) dated June 23, 1941 literally reads: "... despite enhanced reconnaissance, large forces of cavalry and tanks have not yet been found in the Bialystok area ..." Of course, the area of deployment of the 6th mechanized

corps was not chosen by chance. Even on modern road maps from Bialystok (now Poland again) you can only go in one direction - to the west, along the highway to Warsaw. There were no roads to the east, into the depths of Belarus (and, consequently, reasons to expect the offensive of the main enemy forces here), just as there were no roads in 1941, and there are no now. Moreover, from the military historical work of the former chief of staff of the 4th Army, L.M. Sandalov "Combat operations of the troops of the 4th Army of the Western Front in the initial period of the Great Patriotic War" [79], it becomes known that "in March-April 1941, during the district operational game on maps in Minsk, a front-line offensive operation was worked out from the territory of Western Belarus in the direction of Bialystok - Warsaw ... For the last week of June, the district headquarters was preparing a game with the headquarters of the 4th Army also for an offensive operation ... "And what else was there to prepare for, if only 80 remained from the then state border to Warsaw km along the highway ... The 11th MK was much worse equipped, but it also included 31 tanks of new types (3 KB and 28 T-34). Thus, in total, KMG Boldin was armed with at least 383 of the latest diesel tanks with powerful weapons (a long-barreled 76-mm cannon pierced the frontal armor of any German tanks at a distance of 1000 - 1200 m) and reliable armor protection.

What could the German infantry oppose to this? Almost nothing. The main armament of the anti-tank division of the Wehrmacht infantry division was a 37-mm cannon, capable of penetrating armor of 30-35 mm at a distance of 500 meters. This was quite enough to deal with light Soviet BT or T-26 tanks. But after the very first encounters with our new tanks, the German soldiers gave their anti-tank gun the nickname "door knocker" (the meaning of this black humor is that it could only knock on the armor of the Soviet "thirty-four"). The sloping 45-mm armor plate of our T-34 was not penetrated by the German 37-mm gun even when firing from an extremely short distance of 200 meters. Well, about the possibility of fighting a heavy KB tank (frontal armor 90 mm, side armor -75 mm) is out of the question. This 50-ton steel monster could iron the battle formations of the German infantry almost unhindered, as on a training ground. Only in the summer of 1940 did the Germans put into production

a 50-mm anti-tank gun, which entered service with the Wehrmacht in the amount of 2 (two) pieces per infantry regiment, and even then not every division had these guns! Yes, somehow against this background, the endless lamentations of party propagandists about how "the industry of all conquered Europe worked for Germany", and Stalin really believed Hitler and was engaged in purely "peaceful creative work" look somehow strange against this background ...

Not only that, the military-political leadership of fascist Germany did not provide its army with any means of fighting the new Soviet tanks. It also managed not to notice the very fact of their appearance in service with the Red Army! Only after the start of hostilities, on June 25, 1941, in the diary of F. Halder (Chief of Staff of the Ground Forces) does the following entry appear: "... some data was received on a new type of Russian heavy tank: weight - 52 tons, side armor - 8 see... the 88-mm anti-aircraft gun, apparently, pierces its side armor (it is not yet known exactly)... information was received about the appearance of another tank armed with a 75-mm cannon and three machine guns... "[12] In Goth's memoirs

and Guderian, the first reports of a "super-heavy Russian tank" (i.e. KB) refer only to the end of June - the beginning of July 1941.

A discussion of how the military intelligence of an extremely aggressive state could not notice the appearance of new types of tanks in mass production from Germany's main potential enemy for a year and a half is beyond the scope of our book. This is a topic for a separate discussion. Everyone did their best - including Hitler, who categorically forbade conducting intelligence activities against the USSR after the signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Borders (September 28, 1939) [19], and the mysterious head of the Abwehr, Admiral Canaris (a part-time British intelligence agent), and many others. For our investigation, it is enough to

note the fact that the German infantry divisions not only did not receive the means to fight the new Soviet tanks, but the very appearance of huge 50-ton armored monsters from the bowl of Belarusian forests should have been a terrible surprise for them. Everything is relative. Every conscientious schoolboy should

know that the Germans

hoped to achieve success in the Battle of Kursk, in particular, due to the sudden massive use of new heavy tanks "tiger" and "panther". This thesis is invariably present in any text devoted to the Battle of Kursk, which Soviet historians called (and still call) "the largest tank battle of the Second World War." Moreover, from the memoirs of German generals, it turns out that the German command also placed great hopes on the use of new tanks.

True, the question of "surprise" by the summer of 1943 had already been practically eliminated. Hitler himself "stepped on the throat of his own song", ordering, despite all the objections of Guderian, to send a company of the first serial "tigers" to Leningrad. In September 1942, in the swampy forests, the "tigers" were brought into battle and suffered heavy losses, partly bogged down in a quagmire [65]. Thus, the new technique was irreversibly declassified.

As for the "mass character", then in the entire tank group of German troops on the Kursk Bulge (16 tank and 6 motorized divisions, three separate tank battalions and a separate tank brigade), there were only 147 "tigers" and 200 "panthers".

A total of 347 "new types" tanks out of a total of 2,361 tanks. With such forces, the German command planned to encircle and destroy Soviet troops consisting of fifteen combined arms and three tank armies (as well as fourteen separate corps) on a front of 550 km [VIZH, 1993, No. 7].

Boldin's KMG, which included 1,500 tanks and armored vehicles, including 383 "new types" tanks (T-34 and KB), had a task of a completely different, much more modest scale: to inflict a short (two or three days in time) and 80-90 km in space) strike at the enemy infantry, and then retreat to the reserve of the front commander. The effect of surprise - the most important

condition for success in a war - was also amplified by the fact that German intelligence was also unable to timely reveal the fact of the concentration of a powerful strike force in the Bialystok region. Only in the evening of June 23, in the report of the department of intelligence and counterintelligence of the headquarters of the 9th army of the Wehrmacht, it was noted "the appearance in the area south of

Grodno of the 1st and 2nd motorized mechanized brigades" [61]. What does this mean? There were no "mechanized brigades" in the Western Front, among the six tank and motorized divisions of KMG Boldin there was not one with numbers 1 or 2. It is only clear that in the end the Germans could not help but see the movement of huge tank columns, but this happened already literally a few hours before

the start of the counteroffensive of the Soviet troops. But "the defeat of the Nazi troops near Vilnius" did not take place.

### **Without witnesses**

By and large, nothing happened at all. "... Due to the scattered formations, instability of control, and the powerful impact of enemy aircraft, it was not possible to concentrate the counterstrike grouping at the appointed time. The ultimate goals of the counterattack (destroy the enemy's Suvalka grouping and capture Suwalki) were not achieved, there were heavy losses ... "This is literally everything that is said about the course and result of Boldin's KMG counterattack in the most solid historical study of the latter



decades - in the monograph "1941 - lessons and conclusions" repeatedly mentioned above.

The phrase about "great losses" hides the fact that all three formations that took part in the counterattack of Boldin's KMG (6th and 11th MK, 6th CC) were completely defeated, all military equipment was abandoned in the forests and on roads, most of the personnel were captured or died, the few survivors for several weeks and months were selected in small groups from the encirclement and went to their own already when the front line rolled back to Rzhev and Vyazma.

In the previous fundamental works of Soviet historians (the 12-volume "History of the Second World War" and the 6-volume "History of the Great Patriotic War"), there was nothing at all, except for an indistinct statement of the fact that the counterattacks of the Soviet troops, provided for by Directive No. 3, turned out to be fruitless.

In the documents of the beginning of the war published in recent years, it is impossible to find anything more intelligible than the texts of such orders that flew from the headquarters of the Western Front: "... why is the mechanized corps (meaning the 6th MK) not advancing, who is to blame? Take action now, don't panic, take control. It is necessary to beat the enemy in an organized manner, and not run without control ... Why don't you give the task of attacking

mechanized corps ... "[40] In the widely known, now classic military-historical works of German generals (Tippelskirch, Butlar, Blumentritt) Soviet troops in the Grodno region - not a word.

In the memoirs of G. Hoth ("Tank Operations"), we do not find any mention of the Red Army's offensive in the Grodno region. It seems that the commander of the 3rd tank group of the Wehrmacht never found out that a huge enemy tank group was aiming at the flank and rear of his troops.

In F. Halder's textbook "War Diary" some mention of the actions of Boldin's group appears only in the notes dated June 25, 1941: "... the Russians, surrounded in the Bialystok region, are attacking, trying to break out of the encirclement to the north in the direction of Grodno ... rather serious complications on the front of the 8th Army Corps, where large masses of Russian cavalry are attacking the western flank of the corps ... "

But already in the evening of the same day (recording at 18.00), Halder states with satisfaction: "... the situation south of Grodno has stabilized. The enemy's attacks were repulsed ... "Halder never returns to the description of these

events, and this description looks rather strange - nevertheless, the main striking force of KMG was by no means "large masses of cavalry", but two mechanized corps. But about "serious complications" on the front of the 20th Army Corps, which was supposed to be the first to meet the advancing Soviet tanks, Halder says nothing at all ... If we were writing a science fiction novel, then now would be the time to talk about how SOMETHING rose from the gloomy abyss of the Belarusian swamps and swallowed without a trace a huge armored armada. But the genre of this book is a

documentary historical investigation, and we will not be able to write off the defeat on "evil spirits". And KMG Boldin did not disappear without a trace. According to the stories of local residents, collected by enthusiasts from the Minsk search association "Batkovshchina", "at the end of June 1941, the area of the Volkovysk-Slonim highway was littered with abandoned tanks, burned-out vehicles, broken cannons so that direct and bypass traffic was impossible .. The columns

of prisoners reached 10 km in length..." [8] The phrase about many kilometers of columns of prisoners may seem to someone an ordinary exaggeration of people who witnessed a gigantic catastrophe. Alas. Even according to a completely conservative (in the good sense of the word) study of modern Russian military historians ("The classification has been removed"), the irretrievable losses of the Western Front in the first 17 days of the war amounted to 341 thousand people, of which at least 60%, i.e. about 200 thousand people were taken prisoner. It is worth noting that these

figures fully coincide with the long-known German reports, according to which, during the battle in the Minsk-Bialystok region, the Wehrmacht captured 288 thousand prisoners [VIZH, 1989, No. 9]. Memoirs could shed light on the reasons for the defeat of KMG

Soviet generals - but only a few managed to write them.

Commander of the 6th Cavalry Corps, Major General I.S. Nikitin was captured and shot by the Germans in a concentration camp in April 1942 [20, 124].

Commander of the 36th Cavalry Division of the 6th Cavalry Corps, Major General E.S. Zybin was captured, where he actively collaborated with the Nazis. According to the verdict of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR, he was shot on August 25, 1946. He has not been rehabilitated to this day [20, 124].

The commander of the 6th mechanized corps, Khatskilevich, died on June 25. The circumstances of his death are unknown to this day. A few days later, near the town of Klepachi, Slonim district, an armored car was hit, in which officers of the headquarters of the 6th mechanized corps tried to take out the body of the deceased commander. At the same time, the head of artillery of the corps, Major General A.S., was mortally wounded. Mitrofanov [8].

Commander of the 4th Panzer Division of the 6th Mechanized Corps, Major General A.G. Potaturchev was captured, after being released from the Dachau concentration camp, he was arrested by the NKVD and died in prison in July 1947. Posthumously rehabilitated in 1953 [20, 124].

Commander of the 29th Motorized Division of the 6th Mechanized Corps, Major General I.P. Bikzhanov was taken prisoner, after his release until December 1945 he "passed a special check in the NKVD." In April 1950, he was dismissed "due to illness". He lived to be 93 years old, but did not publish his memoirs [20, 124]. They were

able to get out of the encirclement after the defeat of the KMG, but soon the commander of the 7th Panzer Division of the 6th Mechanized Corps, Major General SV, died in battle. Borzilov and the commander of the 29th Panzer Division of the 11th Mechanized Corps,

Colonel N.P. Studnev [8]. They were captured and died in Nazi concentration camps, the deputy commander of the 11th mechanized corps and the chief of artillery of the 11th mechanized corps, Major General P.G. Makarov and N.M. Starostin [20, 124]

The commander of the 204th motorized division of the 11th mechanized corps, Colonel AM Pirov, went missing [8]. Well,

the fate of the high command of the Western Front was even more tragic. The commander

of the Western Front, the hero of the defense of Madrid and the breakthrough of the Mannerheim Line, Army General Pavlov was arrested on July 4 and on July 22, 1941, exactly a month after the start of the war

(loved, Comrade Stalin loved theatrical effects), sentenced to death.

According

to the same "case", for "cowardice, inaction and alarmism, which created the possibility of the enemy breaking through the front" [67, 81], they were shot:

- Chief of Staff of the Front V.E. Klimovsky; -

head of communications of the front A.T.

Grigoriev; - head of artillery of the front N.A.

Cry; - Commander of the 4th Army of the Western Front A.A.

Korobkov; - Deputy Commander of the Air Force of the

Tayursky Front. Commander of the Air Force of the Western Front, Hero of the Soviet Union, veteran of the fighting in Spain, Major General I.I. Kopets shot himself on the first day of the war, June 22, 1941.

The attentive reader must have already noticed the absence of mournful list of executed generals of the same surname.

But this is really very strange. Both by military rank (lieutenant general) and by position (deputy front commander) I.V. Boldin stood above all the repressed, with the exception of Pavlov himself, of course. And if the entire command of the front was guilty of "criminal inaction and the collapse of command and control", then how could the head of the main strike force of the Western Front go unpunished? Boldin could not justify his inexperience. His track record already included two "liberation

campaigns" - to Poland (September 1939) and to Bessarabia (June 1940). Moreover, during the invasion of Poland in September 1939, Commander Boldin commanded a

cavalry-mechanized group of the Belorussian Front, which led the offensive along the Slonim-Volkovysk line and, after a fierce battle on September 20-21, took the city of Grodno by storm. So for Boldin, the beginning of the war was like in a song: "We will lead war horses along the roads we know for our beloved people's commissar ..." Most likely, the solution to Boldin's happy fate is very simple. The Chekists simply could not call him for execution in time - from the end of June to the beginning of August he was surrounded and was inaccessible to them. Well, in August of the 41st, after the defeat of most of the cadre army, after the capture of dozens of generals (in just six months of the 41st year, 63 generals were in German captivity), Stalin

became more restrained in the executions of the commanders who remained in the ranks. Moreover, after leaving the encirclement, Boldin was marked with a kind word in the order of the Supreme Commander, promoted and appointed

commander of the 50th Army. The severe mental stress did not go unnoticed. The main motif of Boldin's memoirs is that the stupid and soulless martinet Pavlov ruined everything: "... Moving away from the apparatus, I thought: how far Pavlov is from reality! We had little strength to counterattack the enemy ... But what to do? An order is an order! Many years later, after the war, I became aware that Pavlov was giving my non-existent (whose fault is it "non-existent"? - M.S.) shock group one combat order after another. Why

did Pavlov need to issue these orders? To whom did he send them? (It seems that Boldin did not understand that the task that he failed in disgrace was assigned to him.) Perhaps they served only to create the appearance in front of Moscow that some measures were being taken on the Western Front to counter advancing enemy ... "But these are still" flowers ". In a very serious

document, in a memorandum filed during the rehabilitation of Pavlov and his "accomplices" in July 1957, Boldin (by that time already a colonel general) wrote the following verbatim: "... Pavlov is to blame for asking Stalin about appointment to

the post of commander of the troops of the district, knowing that from the beginning of the war he would be the commander of the troops of the front. Pavlov, having poor operational training, could not be the commander of the front troops ... The chief of staff of the Klimovskikh front was to blame for falling under the influence of Pavlov and turning into Pavlov's assistant ... "[81, p. 194] Boldin modestly kept silent

about who had "not weak operational training". Much becomes clearer if we recall that

before being appointed deputy commander of the Western Special Military District, Boldin was commander of the Odessa military district. Agree, being the first leader in Odessa and becoming a deputy in Minsk are two big differences...

In fact, the most senior commander in rank and position, who led the counterattack of the cavalry-mechanized group of the Western Front, was not Boldin, but Kulik. Kulik is not a bird, but a big man. Such a large military commander... "...in the back of the office, a door opened, and Marshal Kulik,

a respectable man, tumbled through it. His face was brown-red and quite impressive in size... His speech consisted of some completely unrelated and meaningless phrases. It was pure nonsense, the nonsense of a half-drunk. The worst thing is that not only the marshal, but also the deputy people's commissar of defense of the USSR stood before the commanders ... "[163] On June 24, 1941, Marshal Kulik arrived at Boldin's headquarters in

as the plenipotentiary representative of the Headquarters on the Western Front.

"... Marshal Kulik ordered everyone to take off their insignia, throw away their documents, then change into peasant clothes and change clothes himself ... He offered to drop weapons, and I personally orders and documents. However, except for his adjutant, no one left documents and weapons ... "

This is how, briefly and clearly, in the report of the head of the 3rd department (i.e., counterintelligence) of the 10th Army, the leading role of the Deputy People's Commissar of Defense in the combat operations of the Western Front looks like [VIZH, 1993, No. 12]. For all this, Grigory Ivanovich was only scolded. Even the marshal's stars that he threw out in the bushes were returned.

On September 2, 1941, Kulik was appointed commander of a separate 54th army, which was instructed to unblock Leningrad. On September 12, another marshal, Klim Voroshilov, was sent to help Kulik. Four days later, the Headquarters reminded Kulik that "the new divisions and brigade are being given to you not to take the Mga station, but to develop success after the capture of the station. The available forces are quite enough to take the Mga station not once, but twice" [5, p. 194]. Four days later (September 24, 1941) Headquarters Directive No. 002288

arrived at the headquarters of the 54th Army: "For the third time, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command orders you to take all measures to immediately occupy Sinyavino and join with the Leningrad troops. Personal responsibility for the fulfillment of this rests with Marshal Kulik ... "However, personal responsibility was reduced only to the fact that

On September 26, 1941, Stalin ordered "the commander of the 54th Army, Marshal Kulik, to be recalled to the disposal of the Headquarters." This biography of the commander Kulik has not yet ended. On November 8, 1941, he was sent to strengthen the defense of Kerch, the last patch of Crimean land remaining in our hands. Arriving in the Kuban as a plenipotentiary representative of the Headquarters (and, to be fair, noting himself with a two-hour visit to Kerch), Kulik seriously took up food supply issues. Himself. The most perishable delicacies were sent to the young, fourth in a row, wife of the "red marshal" by military transport aircraft, everything else (including 50 kg of fat, 200 bottles of cognac, 40 boxes of tangerines, 20 kg of pressed caviar) was loaded into a special wagon and sent to Moscow [81, p. 238].

In February 1942, for this looting in the combat zone, Kulik was put on trial for the first time and roughly punished: he was demoted in the military rank from marshal to major general, removed from the post of deputy commissar and removed from the Central Committee. In the party of communists - fighters for universal equality

and fraternity - have so far been left. In the spring of 1943, Kulik surfaced again. For unknown merits, he was promoted in rank and even given command of the 4th Guards Army. I ordered ... I had to soon be removed and sent out of harm's way to the post of deputy head of the Main

Directorate of the formation of the Red Army. In April 1945, for the collapse of combat training in spare military units and "everyday decay" (that is, for systematic drunkenness and b ...) they removed him from this job, again

demoted to the rank of major general. But still no shots were fired. The second, last and final sentence was carried out only on August 24, 1950. After the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court established that in drunken conversations, Comrade Kulik often scolded the party that elevated and kept this nonentity at the heights of power for so many years. Comrade Stalin never forgave anyone like this. Even to their nominees

Incredibly, Kulik's amazing biography still does not end there! In April 1956 he was rehabilitated, and in 1957, not without the knowledge of his old comrade, the then all-powerful minister

defense of the USSR Zhukov, even "restored" in the rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union!

The quotation marks around the word "restored" are not accidental. At the time of his second arrest, Kulik was a major general, so it would be more correct to talk about a unique, one-of-a-kind case of a posthumous (!) promotion in rank, and even by as many as four steps ... Strictly speaking, the mere presence of such military leaders, like Kulik and Boldin, could doom the troops to an unprecedented defeat. In search of other reasons, let us turn (for lack of better sources) to the memories of the few survivors.

## **Anatomy of a disaster**

Boldin is an outstanding memoirist. He has a wonderful, tenacious memory, preserving even the most insignificant details. Here, describing his first day in the war, he recalls both the suffocating heat, and the fact that the water in the flask was warm and did not refresh his parched throat. In the most detailed way, on dozens of pages, Boldin describes the story of his wanderings through the forests surrounded.

But about the main thing - about the preparation, conduct and results counterattack - it is said very briefly and sparingly. So, the first day of the war, the evening of June 22. "... The commander of the 10th Army leans over the map, sighs, then says:

- What to fight? Almost all of our aviation and anti-aircraft artillery have been destroyed. Ammunition is scarce. We are running out of fuel for tanks... Already in the first hours of the attack, enemy aircraft raided our fuel depots. They are still on fire. On the railway lines, fuel tanks were also destroyed ...

... the commander of the 6th cavalry corps, General Major I. S. Nikitin. He looks worried. - How are you? I ask the cavalryman. "Bad, Comrade General. The 6th division was destroyed... - Where are the remnants of the division?

"He ordered to concentrate in the forest northeast of Bialystok."



Without further ado, let's compare this paragraph with an excerpt from the memoirs of the chief of staff of the 94th cavalry regiment of the very "defeated" 6th cavalry division V.A. Grechanichenko [83].

"... At about 10 o'clock on June 22, we came into contact with the enemy. A shootout ensued. An attempt by the Germans to break through to Lomzha on the move was repulsed. To the right, the 48th Cavalry Regiment held the defense. At 11:30 p.m. on June 22, on the orders of the corps commander, Major General I. S. Nikitin, units of the division headed for Bialystok in two columns in a forced march ... By 17 p.m. on June 23, the division concentrated in a forest area 2 kilometers north of Bialystok ... "

The second day of the war, June 23, 1941: "...by dawn, the headquarters of the 6th mechanized and 6th cavalry corps settled in a new place in the forest fifteen kilometers northeast of Bialystok. This picturesque forest corner has also become my command post ... "That's right. And in the protocol of Pavlov's interrogation there is confirmation that all the headquarters, already located far from the battlefield (the distance from Bialystok to the then border is 100 km), went even further: "... on the second day of the 10th Army , except for the army headquarters, remained in their places.

The army headquarters changed its command post, retreating east of Bialystok to the Valpy area ... "[67] What did our generals do when they gathered in a picturesque forest corner? "Time

is running out, but I still can't fulfill Pavlov's order to create a shock cavalry-mechanized

group. The most unpleasant thing (so in the text. - M.S.) is that I do not know where the 11th mechanized corps of General D.K. Mostovenko is located. We have no connection either with him or with the 3rd army, which he is part of ... "

An amazing confession. How could the deputy commander of the district not know the area where the mechanized corps was deployed? The mechanized corps is not a needle in a haystack. There were only six of them in the entire district, and if you do not take into account the 17th and 20th MK, the formation of which was just beginning, then there were exactly four combat-ready mechanized corps. We will have to recall that the headquarters of the 11th mechanized corps and the 204th motorized division were stationed in Volkovysk (85 km east of Bialystok), the 29th tank division - in Grodno (75 km northeast of

Bialystok), and the 33rd Panzer Division - in the area of \u200b\u200bthe town of Indura (18

km south of Grodno). In other words, from the "picturesque forest corner 15 km northeast of Bialystok", in which Boldin and Nikitin hid, it was about 60-70 kilometers to the divisions of the 11th mechanized corps. But it was not possible to overcome this distance.

Until the final defeat that took place on June 26-27, Boldin not only was never at the location of the troops entrusted to him, but he was not even able to establish any connection with the 11th mechanized corps. Just in case, let us remind the attentive reader that KMG Boldin had two communications squadrons, a cavalry communications division, three corps air squadrons and eight (!) Separate communications battalions.

For the most meticulous, you can also indicate their numbers: 4, 7, 124, 185th, both in the 6th mechanized corps and 29, 33, 583rd and 456th, both in the 11th

mechanized corps [8]. "... To top it off, at dawn, enemy bombers caught the 36th cavalry division on the march (the same one whose commander went over to the service of the Germans) and disheveled it. So now there can be no question of a counterattack ... I was sitting in a tent, overwhelmed by gloomy thoughts ...

"[80] Of course, Boldin never said a word anywhere about what specific forces and means were included in the mechanized horse group, in which grouping and with what forces the enemy attacked, so that the phrase that the "disarray" of one cavalry division made a counterattack by the Soviet troops "completely impossible" did not seem to readers as absurd as it really is.

And the attentive reader must have already noticed a very strange chronology of events: according to Boldin, on June 22 the 6th Cavalry Division was "destroyed", at dawn on June 23 the 36th was "disheveled", there were simply no other cavalry units in the KMG, and suddenly after Of this, on June 25, the chief of staff of the ground forces of the Wehrmacht notes in his diary that in the Grodno region "large masses of Russian cavalry attack the western flank of the 8th Corps" ??

Yes, it is difficult for a commander to lead troops if he sits in a picturesque forest, tens of kilometers away from the battlefield, replacing intelligence with rumors and gloomy thoughts ...

“... called Khatskilevich, who was in the units.

“Comrade General,” came his excited voice, “running out of fuel and ammunition.

“Hear me, comrade Khatskilevich,” I strained my voice, trying to shout over the terrible rumble of enemy planes flying over us. — Hold on! I will immediately take all measures to help. We have no connection with the

headquarters of the front. Therefore, immediately after talking with Khatskilevich, I sent a letter to Minsk by plane, in which I asked to urgently organize the transfer of fuel and ammunition by air ... ”[80]

The ellipsis should not confuse the reader. We haven't missed anything. It was precisely this - sending a letter to Minsk - that "all the measures" taken by the first deputy front commander were limited to.

Third day of the

war. “... we are actually behind enemy lines. Contact has been lost with many units of the 10th Army, there is little ammunition and there is no fuel at all... there is still no information from Minsk... The enemy is still pressing. We are fighting in the environment. And we have less and less power. Tankers took up defense in a ten-kilometer strip. Three kilometers behind them is our command post...” And finally,

the fifth day of the war. “On the

fifth day of the war, having no ammunition, the troops were forced to retreat and dispersed in scattered groups through the forests” [80]. “They dispersed in scattered groups through the forests” - to be honest, not every Soviet general in his memoirs was capable of such frankness. Here, in fact, is all that can

be found out about the circumstances of defeat from the memoirs of Boldin.

Before us is a standard set of “force majeure circumstances” prescribed to Soviet historical science: there was no communication, there was no fuel, the ammunition ran out.

Why is there no connection - enemy saboteurs are all wires cut. Where

did the fuel go - German aircraft bombed all the warehouses. Why the shells weren't delivered, the letter didn't reach Minsk...

Unnecessary details that interfere with the assimilation of the only true truth - how many wires were there, how many saboteurs were there, how much power reserve the Soviet tanks had at one gas station, how many shells are included in one transportable ammunition load, with what forces German aviation could bomb "all warehouses" and how many of these very warehouses were in only one ZapOVO - discarded as unnecessary. The simple and indisputable truth that the Armed Forces are being created in order to operate in the face of enemy opposition has also been discarded as superfluous. What kind of army is this, if

it is able to fight only then,

when the enemy does not interfere with her?

Perhaps the most interesting and valuable thing about Boldin's memoirs is what they don't

contain. And in order to see what is not, let's open the memoirs of another general, who on the same days of June 41st led the actions of a large motorized unit. So, G. Guderian, "Memoirs of a Soldier":

"... On June 22, at 6:50 am, I crossed the Bug

in an assault boat ... following the tracks of the tanks of the 18th Panzer Division, I reached the bridge over the Lesna River. .. at my approach, the Russians began to scatter in different directions ... throughout the first half of the day on June 22, I accompanied the 18th TD ... .. On June 23 at 4:10 I left my command post and

headed for 12 th Army Corps, from this corps I went to the 47th Tank Corps, to the village of Bildeiki, 23 km east of Brest Litovsk. Then I went to the 17th Panzer Division, where I arrived at 8 o'clock ... Then I went to Pruzhany (70 km northeast of the border. - M.S), where the command post of the tank group was transferred .. ... On June 24, at 8:25 am, I left my command post and drove towards Slonim (this is another 80 km deep into Soviet

territory. - M.S.) ... along the way, I came across Russian infantry, holding the highway under fire ... I was forced to intervene and machine gun fire from the commander's tank forced the enemy to leave their positions ... .. at 11:30 I arrived at the command post of the 17th Panzer Division, located on the western outskirts of Slonim ( i.e. already in

deep rear of the 10th army and KMG Boldin. - M.S), where, in addition to the division commander, I met the commander of the 47th corps ... "[65]

"Where, besides the division commander, did I meet the commander of a tank

corps..." And this meeting of three generals takes place at a field command post, a hundred meters from the line of fire. That is the whole clue as to why the Red Army found itself on its own territory "without communication", and the German army on our territory - with communication.

Party historians have been explaining to us for decades that communication in war is provided by wires and radio stations (which allegedly did not exist in 1941). And Guderian simply and clearly shows that the problem of communications and command and control of troops is solved not by wires, but by people! The

commander of the advanced 17th Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht did not have to call anywhere. His immediate superior, the commander of the 47th tank corps, together with him personally directs the battle at the same command post, and the most important commander among them, the commander of the tank group, breaks through into each of his divisions several times a day under enemy fire on a tank . And if Guderian suggested that they sit down for a couple of days in a "picturesque forest corner" and send "letters by plane to Berlin" from there, then at best they would take it as a joke - stupid and inappropriate in the war. And this is not at all the vicious grumbling of an amateur. Colonel General Sandalov in his book of memoirs [82]

quotes a member of the Military Council of the 4th Army:

"... Shlykov spoke again: a huge evil is the separation of large headquarters from the troops. This leads to a loss of control over the battle ... the front headquarters is located somewhere in the Minsk region, more than three hundred kilometers from the advanced troops. The headquarters of the armies, in order not to lose contact (??? - M.S.) with him, are also located in the depths, in some places more than fifty kilometers from the front line ... And where the hell is this good for! .. " words. True, from the further text of Sandalov's memoirs it follows that a few hours after this conversation, the army headquarters once again moved to the east. Well, on June 26, Pavlov's headquarters ended up near Mogilev - 500 km from the border!

As for the wires, it was not so bad with them on the Western Front. According to the memorandum of the chief of staff of the front, Major General Klimovsky, dated June 19, 1941, the district communications service had 117,000 insulators, 78,000 hooks and 261 tons of wires at its disposal [2, p. 44]. As

an illustration of the question of the real technical equipment of the Red Army, the following data can be cited from the memorandum of the NGOs and the General Staff of the Red Army to the Politburo. At the beginning of January 1941, the number in the Armed Forces of the USSR was: [16, doc. 272] - front-line radio stations (PAT) 40 pieces (i.e. 8 for each

of the five future fronts); - army (2A, RAF, 11AK) 845 pieces (i.e. fifty per

army); - hull and divisional (ZA, RSB, 4A) 768 pieces;

- regimental (5 AK) 5909 pieces (about 4 pieces per

regiment); This was the number in January 1941. But the factories continued to operate, and by the summer the number of radio stations in the troops was to become even greater. Now a few words about quality. The smallest of the above radio stations (5AK) had a range of 25 km for telephone communications and 50 km for Morse code telegraph commun

In a long article with the eloquent title "The Origins of the Defeat in Belarus" [78], the author informs readers with a woeful sigh that the provision of radio communications equipment for the ZAPOVO troops was very, very low: "regimental radio stations - by 41%, battalion - by 58%, company - by 70%.

As is customary with us, the facts that interfere with the correct educational process - and how much this is in pieces per regiment or rifle company - are omitted. Let's try to make up for this unfortunate omission. According to the staffing of a rifle division from April 1941, one howitzer artillery regiment should have had 37 radio stations (for 36 howitzers), an artillery regiment - 25 radio stations (for 24 guns), 3 radio stations in a rifle regiment and 5 radio stations in each rifle battalion. Evaluate this phrase: "company radio station." Doesn't it speak of the highest (for the first half of the 20th century) level of technical equipment of the Stalinist army?

By the way, only one company of saboteurs from the notorious Brandenburg special-purpose regiment was allocated to the Wehrmacht tank groups. The company consisted of 2 officers, 220 non-commissioned officers and privates, including 20-30 people with knowledge of the Russian language [VIZH, 1989, No. 5]. And with such and such forces, the Germans, according to Boldin, already in the early morning of June 22, 1941, "for fifty kilometers they knocked down all the telegraph and telephone poles" - and this is only in the band of one 3rd army!

On this we will close (for now) Boldin's book. We will not discuss his military talent, we do not dare to reproach him for the lack of personal courage, but General Boldin cannot act as a witness to the defeat of the cavalry mechanized group of the Western Front. He was simply not there (at the site of the rout).

Unfortunately, even from real witnesses it is difficult to get an intelligible presentation, if not of the causes, then at least of the

circumstances of the disaster. Take the memoirs of V.A. Grechanichenko (Chief of Staff of the 94th Cavalry Regiment of the 6th Cavalry Division). They are full of lively, unimagined pictures of a terrible defeat. This is how he describes what Boldin briefly outlined with the words "on the fifth day of the war, without ammunition, the troops dispersed in scattered groups through the forests": warehouses by the Germans - M.S.), wagons overflowing with people. We tried to stop the military, who were traveling and walking along with the refugees. But no one wanted to listen. Sometimes, in response to our demands, shots were fired (that is, there was still ammunition left - for firing at our own. - M.S). Everyone already claimed that Slonim was occupied, that German landing forces landed ahead, barriers of tanks that had broken through, that there was no point in defending here. On June 28, as soon as the sun rose, enemy aircraft began a general processing of the banks of the Ros and the Volkovysk region. But in essence, on this day, they finally ceased to exist as military formations of the formation and unit of the 10th Army. Everything was mixed up and rolled east like a shaft... ...when our small group reached the old

border in the afternoon of June 30, the same chaos reigned here as on the banks of the Ros. All the copses were packed with cars, wagons, hospitals,

refugees, scattered units and groups of our troops ... "[83]

But it is difficult to find out how and why our army reached such a state from Grechanichenko's memoirs. From his description it is clear how in the first days of the war his regiment moved non-stop and chaotically along forest roads; the text flashes the names of unknown Polish-Belarusian places: Sokulka, Krynki, Berestovitsy, Sidra ...

The first contact with the enemy occurs only in the evening of the 24th: "... at 21

o'clock on June 24, the squadron came into contact with the enemy in the valley of the Biebrza River south of Sidra. The regimental commander brought artillery into battle to support the lead detachment. The enemy could not withstand the onslaught and retreated across the river ... "There is no exaggeration here. It was on this day, June 24, that an entry appeared in Halder's diary about "rather serious complications that arose on the front of the 8th Army Corps, where large masses of Russian cavalry attacked the western flank of the corps."

By the way. About the use of cavalry, and even among the Belarusian swamps, our party "historians" argued with a sad shake of the head, as an example of the blatant backwardness of the Red Army and its complete unpreparedness for waging a modern war. Yes, that's bad luck: as part of the most powerful, 2nd Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht, led by the not even "backward" Guderian, there was also a cavalry division! And for some reason, Guderian put it on his right (southern, that is) flank, in the very quagmire of the Polesye swamps.

As soon as Soviet historians and memoirists did not "fight" with this division! Boldin, in his memoirs, went so far as to change saddles for parachutes and informed readers about the presence in the German Army Group Center of not a cavalry, but ... an "airborne" division! But the chest opens

very simply. Neither Guderian nor Pavlov were going to attack with horse lava in the swamp. The horse in the cavalry divisions of the Second World War served as a vehicle that increased the mobility of the formation (in comparison with conventional infantry) many times over. And directly into battle, both German and Soviet cavalymen went, as a rule, on foot.



Of course, no horse can compete with the motor in the ability to move continuously, for many hours and for many days. Therefore, after friend Roosevelt gave Comrade Stalin hundreds of thousands of three-axle Studebakers with their fantastic reliability and maneuverability, the era of cavalry in the Red Army ended.

Although not suddenly and not immediately. So, back in July 1944, as part of the 1st Ukrainian Front, two cavalry-mechanized groups were created under the command of Lieutenant General S.V. Sokolov and V.K. Baranov, and even in the liberation of Prague in May 1945, nine (!) Cavalry divisions took part. Well, in the summer of 1941, neither we nor the Germans yet had a sufficient number of off-road vehicles capable of moving rifle units along winding forest roads after advancing tanks, and the presence of large cavalry forces was one of the significant advantages of the Red Army. In practice, this obvious "theory" looked like this: "... the motorized units were to move that day along a hilly sandy area covered with a dense virgin forest.

Movement along

it (especially French-made cars) was almost impossible ... The cars got stuck all the time and stopped the entire convoy following them, since the possibility of a detour on forest roads was completely excluded ... Infantrymen and gunners were forced to pull out the stuck cars all the time. .. For the command, it was a real torment to see how his "mobile" troops were suffocating ... "

So, the commander of the 3rd Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht, G. Goth, describes the events of June 23, 1941 in his memoirs. Throughout that day, practically without engaging in battle, his motorized divisions traveled no more

than 50-60 km. "We covered a distance of 75 kilometers without halts. The marching columns put themselves in order on the move. There was no time for a break. By 1700 hours on June 23, the division had concentrated in a forest area 2 kilometers north of Bialystok... The day was already drawing to a close when we received the order to move further in the direction of Sokulka. March throw for 35 kilometers was made quickly ... "

And these are lines from Grechanichenko's memoirs. It is easy to make sure that in the forest wilderness of Western Belarus, the Soviet cavalry was at least as mobile as the German

motorized infantry.

In addition, "our cavalry blades" have long ceased serve as the main weapon of the red cavalry.

Some idea of the structure and armament of the Red Army Cavalry Corps of the 1941 model can be obtained, for example, from the memoirs of the legendary commander of the Great Patriotic War, General P.A. Belova (in the first months of the war, he commanded the 2nd Cavalry Corps, deployed on the Southern Front, in Moldova): "... To control the troops, there was a small

mobile headquarters, moving on horseback or in vehicles, an air communications link, a communications division and a commandant squadron. There were no rear institutions in the corps. Each of the two cavalry divisions consisted of four cavalry regiments, a tank

regiment, an artillery battalion and a 76-mm anti-aircraft artillery battalion, a communications squadron and a sapper squadron with an engineering and ferry fleet.

In the cavalry regiment ... there was a machine-gun squadron with 16 machine guns on carts, a battery of 76-mm lightweight regimental guns and special forces. The tank regiment had

about 50 BT tanks and 10 armored vehicles. The horse artillery battalion had a battery of 120 mm

howitzers and three batteries of 76 mm guns.

The air defense of the corps consisted of well-trained 76-mm anti-aircraft battalions of cavalry divisions and platoons of quadruple machine guns in shelves..."

Agree, against the background of these facts, the lamentations of our professional mourners about the "unpreparedness of the Red Army for war" begin to be perceived in a completely different way...

It is also worth noting that the 6th cavalry division, which included the Grechanichenko regiment, in September 1939 was part of the KMG commander Boldin and on September 22 took the "liberated" Bialystok from the hands of the Germans, and the second division of the corps (36th cavalry ) also participated in the "liberation campaign" in the same places: September 19

The 36th Cavalry Division, along with other units of the 3rd and 11th Armies, stormed Vilna (Vilnius).

And how many people's commissars and marshals began their military careers in the 6th Cavalry Division and in the 6th Cavalry Corps! In the fall of 1919, S.K. became the commander of the 6th cd. Timoshenko is a future marshal, people's commissar of defense, twice

Hero of the Soviet Union. The following year, 1920, K.A. became assistant chief of staff of the 6th cd. Meretskov - future Marshal, Hero of the Soviet Union, Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army and Deputy People's Commissar of Defense in 1940-1941.

In the mid-30s, the 6th Cavalry Corps was commanded by G.K. Zhukov is the future marshal, chief of the General Staff (after Meretsky), four times Hero of the Soviet Union, and after Stalin's death, the Minister of Defense of the USSR. In the autumn of

1939, the 6th Cavalry Corps leads another future marshal into battle - A.I. Eremenko. The future Marshal K.S. also served as the chief of staff of an artillery regiment in the same 6th cavalry division. Moskalenko.

Even taking into account the "special role" of the First Cavalry in the formation of the highest command of the Red Army, the 6th Cavalry Corps cannot be called otherwise than an elite unit of the Red Cavalry. It remains only to add that this outstanding cavalry corps met the beginning of the war with Germany in the ancient Polish city of Lomza - i.e. right on the border with Germany!

Repetition is the mother of suggestion. Communist historians propagandists told us so many thousands of times about how the Wehrmacht, having "accumulated two years of experience in modern warfare," attacked "poorly trained Soviet troops," that in the end this highly controversial (more precisely, absurd) hypothesis turned into an indisputable axiom. But let's try to use the head and ask her a simple question: when and where could the Wehrmacht gain this same "two years of experience in warfare"?

Three weeks of fighting in Poland, three to four weeks of active fighting in France, a week in Yugoslavia. That's all. Even purely arithmetically, this is two months, not two years! With the exception of the

May battles in France, the Wehrmacht was dealing with a poorly armed, small enemy. Where was there to gain experience in a tank war, a war of machines and engines? Is it less

Was the experience of Khalkhin Gol and the three months of the Finnish war significant? Yes, the Wehrmacht still had fierce battles during the landing in Norway, on Crete, in the Libyan desert - but these are all "local battles", in which only three or four

divisions took part. Of course, the personnel divisions of the Wehrmacht were trained and trained in the best traditions of the Prussian military.

But were there many of them - personnel? Before the outbreak of World War II, Germany managed to prepare only 35 regular infantry divisions. On their basis, the so-called "infantry divisions of the first wave" were formed - the elite of the Wehrmacht. On June 22, 1941, there were only 24 such divisions in the army groups "North", "Center", "South"

- one fifth of the total number of infantry divisions! Now, from these general considerations, let us return to the tragic history of the defeat of the 6th Cavalry Division. As we already know, this division is one of the best and oldest in the entire Red Army. And what kind of training, what kind of "two-year experience in waging war" could the German infantry divisions opposing it with numbers 162 and 256 have? Both were created already during the war, both were withdrawn to the east after the French campaign, where they stood inactive until June 22, 1941. What can we say about the German infantry, even if there are two (17- I and the 18th) were "newborns". The first of them was created in October 1940 (that is, after the end of the fighting in Poland and France) on the basis of the 27th INFANTRY division, the second - in the same month on the basis of the 4th and 14th infantry divisions . These divisions did not participate in the Balkan campaign, so June 22, 1941

was the first day of the war for them... Let us return, however, to Grechanichenko's memoirs. "... On June 25, German artillery opened massive fire on the entire depth of the regiment's battle order. Enemy aviation was constantly loitering in the air at a low altitude ... Already in the first hours, all our heavy weapons were put out of action, the radio station was broken, communications were completely paralyzed. The regiment suffered heavy losses, was tightly pressed to the ground, deprived of the opportunity to conduct any active operations. Lieutenant Colonel I.G. Petrosyants. I took over the command

It is worth noting that there are several other descriptions of these events:

"... the 6th cavalry division in the morning of June 25 in the initial area for the offensive (Makovlyany, Stepanovka colony) was subjected to heavy bombardment from the air, which lasted until 12 noon. The cavalymen were dispersed and began to withdraw into the forests in disorder..." [8]

By the end of the day on June 25, a detachment of 300 people remained from the entire 6th Cavalry Division, which, under the command of the author of memoirs and a senior lieutenant (evaluate the military rank of commander who took command of the remnants of the regiment!) Y. Gavronsky from the neighboring 48th Cavalry Regiment, begins non-stop withdrawal,

practically without any contact with the enemy. That's the whole "short course" of the history of the defeat of the 6th Cavalry Division. Strong and courageous men tend to be kind and tolerant of other people's weaknesses. V.A. Grechanichenko is a man of exceptional courage. It was to him that the commander of the 3rd Army V.I. Kuznetsov entrusted on July 2, 1941 to lead a detachment covering the breakthrough of a group of troops of the Western Front. Vladimir Alekseevich himself failed to get out of the encirclement, he became a partisan and met the liberation of Belarus in the

position of commissar of the 1st Belarusian Cavalry Partisan Brigade. The author of this book does not claim to be a courageous man. And he, as a specialist familiar with the history of the Second World War in its specific digital dimension, cannot but be puzzled by the size of the losses suffered by the 6th Cavalry Division. In almost a few hours of shelling, the division lost more than 90% of its staff! Could combat

losses be so huge? Shortly after the end of the war, in 1946, the Military Publishing House published a book by Colonel General F.A. Samsonov "Artillery offensive". Summarizing the experience of military operations, the author comes to the average "norms" of 150-200 guns per 1 km of the offensive front and 50 thousand shells of "above average" caliber (122 mm) to suppress the defense of an infantry division. This is an average. In fact, at the final stage of the war, much greater densit

One of the most outstanding examples of the role of artillery in breaking through enemy defenses is the Vistula-Oder operation of the Red Army (January 1945). On the morning of January 12, the front line of defense of the German troops was swept away by massive artillery fire. General D.D. Lelyushenko writes in his memoirs: "... the forest was literally cut like an oblique by fragments of shells ... many prisoners were taken in trenches in a deranged state, just half-mad ... most of the soldiers of the 574th Wehrmacht regiment were killed or wounded ... » [22] But in order to

achieve such a result, the Soviet command created a monstrous artillery density in the breakthrough zone - 420 guns per kilometer of the front! On each meter of the defense of the German troops, 15 large-caliber shells exploded (on average). In the offensive zone of the 5th shock army, 23 kilotons of ammunition were used up in one hour - this is the power of the "Hiroshima" atomic bomb [107, p. 96]. There was nothing like this

in the offensive zone of the 20th and 8th Wehrmacht corps in June 1941 and could not be. A fully staffed wartime German infantry division could only be armed with 74 guns and howitzers of 75-105 mm caliber. On average, one division of the 20th and 8th corps accounted for a front line of 15 km. In other words, having transported their horse carts with ammunition along the pontoon bridges across the Neman and Biebrzha, the Germans, even taking into account the involvement of corps artillery and reasonable massing of funds in the main directions, could have a maximum of two dozen guns per kilometer of the offensive front with one transportable ammunition shells. If such firepower could destroy one division in one day, then World War II would not last six years. It

would have ended in a month - due to the complete mutual extermination of the parties ...

#### **Political report of the political department**

We have equally contradictory and obscure information about the very short combat path of the 11th mechanized corps. However

less what little is known to the author suggests that it was the 11th MK - the "weak link" in Boldin's KMG - that caused the Germans the greatest concern.

Any mention of the 11th MK in traditional Soviet historiography is accompanied by woeful lamentations: "23% equipped with obsolete tanks ... the staffing of vehicles and tractor tractors was 15-20% of the regular norms ... the staffing of tank officers was 45-55 % of the state ... "And so on. All this is pure truth. At all. Let's move on to specific details. First of all, let's replace all these "percentages of unknown from what" with absolute values.

The main armament of the mechanized corps is tanks. In the historical literature, there are a variety of numbers: from 237 units [VIZh, 1989, No. 4] to 414 ("1941 - lessons and conclusions"). The author proposes to take the number 331 as a basis - this is exactly the number of tanks indicated in the document drawn up by the direct participants in the events.

We are talking about the "Political report of the political department of the 11th mechanized corps to the Military Council of the Western Front of July 15, 1941" published in VIZH

(1989, No. 9). Pay special attention, dear reader, to the date of signing the document. On July 15, 1941, Pavlov and his "accomplices" had already been arrested, but the trial had not yet taken place. The commanders who remained at large, who were directly involved in the catastrophic defeat of the Red Army troops, feel behind their backs a distinct whiff of the Lubyanka cellars. We know today that the defeat will be attributed to the "surprise attack" and "obsolete tanks." People who remembered 1937 could and should have expected the worst, and this could not but affect the spirit and intonations of the aforementioned "political report", in which there is not a drop of "politics", but there is a long list of "good reasons". It is not for us to judge the commissars of 1941, but it is simply necessary for a historian to take these circumstances into account.

The tanks in the 11th MK were indeed the most obsolete: 242 T-26 tanks, 18 flamethrower tanks (it is not said on which, but possibly on an even more ancient chassis), 44 BT tanks of the old modification (BT-5). New

tanks - nothing at all: 24 medium T-34s and 3 heavy KVs. In addition, "up to 10-15% of the tanks were not taken on a campaign, as they were under repair."

Total: about 280 combat-ready tanks, almost all of them are light and outdated.

Can a tank formation armed with such "trash" fight?

General Boldin in his memoirs answers this question, as always, brightly, briefly and figuratively: "Yes, and what can be demanded from the T-26? Shoot at sparrows from them ... "[80]

Do we have the right not to believe the general, the hero of the war? No, we don't. We saw the T-26 in a picture in a magazine, and Boldin saw it on the battlefield. Therefore, we will not (yet) be clever, but rather continue reading his (Boldin's) memoirs:

"... by the evening of June 27, we reached the edge of the forest. We see three BT-7 tanks nearby... Seeing us, the tankers got up. The senior reported that each vehicle had a set of ammunition, but no fuel .. "And at that very moment:" ... the country road lit up with dust, and an enemy column of 28 tanks appeared on it. Every minute is precious. He ordered the tankers to open fire. Our blow turned out to be so unexpected for the Nazis that while they came to their senses and opened fire in return, we destroyed twelve (!!! - M.S.) enemy machines..."

The vigilant reader, I hope, has already noticed the catch: the BT-7 is not the T-26 at all.

Yes, the tanks are different, but the gun is the same. Both the T-26 tank, and the BT-5 and BT-7 tanks, and the BA-10 cannon armored vehicles were armed with the same 45 mm cannon (in the tank version it was called "20K sample 1932/38 of the year"). Moreover, when in 1933 at the Kharkov plant No. 183 named after Comintern (that was the name of the most powerful tank plant in the world!) Under the 20K gun, they developed a successful design of a cylindrical turret, then the same turret in Leningrad, at plant No. 174, began to complete the most massive modification of the T-26 tanks. Is it possible to believe

Boldin, who talks about the destruction of 12 German tanks in a few minutes by the fire of 20K anti-sparrow guns? Of course you can.



First, because he saw it with his own eyes. Secondly, because it is quite consistent with tactical specifications of our guns. From the "edge of the forest" to the "country road" in the forest regions of Western Belarus was hardly more than 500 meters. At such a distance, a standard armor-piercing projectile BR-240, fired from a 20K cannon, pierced an armor plate 38 mm thick with an 80% probability [93]. In June 1941, NOT A SINGLE German tank (including the so-called "heavy tank" PZ-IV of the latest series F) had side armor thicker than 30 mm, and thus the flanking fire of the Soviet "forty-five" was fatal to any German tank. Most of the Wehrmacht tanks - a total of 65% of the four tank groups - were PZ-I, PZ-II, PZ38 (t) and PZ-III of the first series, which had frontal armor no thicker than 30 mm, and side armor - 15/20 mm. Our 20K tanks could hit such tanks both in the forehead and on the side, "both in the tail and in the mane", almost like sparrows ...

Everything is relative. I can't imagine why Soviet "historians" ignored this simple, obvious rule for so many years? Of course, the 11th MK was weak and "unfinished" - compared, for example, with the 6th mechanized corps, which had 352 of the latest KB and T-34, hundreds of BTs of the latest modification and six thousand cars.

But it was necessary to fight with the Germans, and not with their neighbors in the district! It is with the Germans, with their equipment, with their weapons, with their capabilities, that the combat power of the 11th mechanized corps must be compared.

The troops of the five western military districts included 20 mechanized corps. If we exclude the 17th and 20th MKs from this list, in which there were only 63 and 94 tanks, respectively (in the Red Army they said "only 94" about 94 tanks), then 18 mechanized corps remain.

The Wehrmacht invasion forces included 17 tank divisions. It is with them that it is possible and necessary to compare our mechanized corps, in particular,

the 11th MK. We have already noted above that the German tank divisions and corps did not have a strictly defined composition. Therefore, let's take for comparison the largest tank division of the Wehrmacht, which was on the entire Eastern Front. This is the 7th Panzer under the command of Major General von Funk. Such a comparison is all the more appropriate because the 7th

etc. was part of the same 3rd tank group of the Wehrmacht, in the flank and rear of which Boldin's KMG should have struck.

The main armament of a tank division is tanks. There were 265 of them in the 7th TD of the

Wehrmacht. And in our "understaffed" 11th MK - 331 tanks. For some reason, it is customary (among Soviet propagandists) to believe that the Germans never broke anything, and the number of combat-ready tanks was always equal to their total number. Even if we accept this absurd assumption, even then the 11th MK surpassed the largest tank division of the Wehrmacht in terms of the

number of combat-ready tanks. Now let's move from quantity to quality. The 7th TD

of the Wehrmacht

was armed with [10]: — 53 PZ-

II tanks; - 167

Czech tanks PZ-38(t); - 30 tanks PZ-IV; - 15 "commander" tanks with machine

guns, 7 of them based on the PZ 38(t). A detailed comparative analysis of the tactical and technical characteristics of Soviet and German tanks at the beginning of the war is given in Part 3 (where we are talking about an oncoming tank battle in Western Ukraine). For now, we will limit ourselves to only a brief indication that the so-called "heavy" German tank PZ-IV truly "cannot be compared" with our T-34, and even more so with the KV monster.

As for the PZ-II and PZ-38(t), this is the same rubbish as our obsolete T-26. Low-power gasoline engine, narrow tracks, snail speed (maximum cross-country speed for the PZ-38(t) is only 15 km/h, for the T-26 a little more - 18 km/h), thin bulletproof armor. The only difference is that, unlike welded Soviet tanks, the armor plates of the Czech PZ-38(t) turret were assembled on rivets, the heads of which, when hit by an enemy projectile, came off and fatally maimed the crew. It was the PZ-38(t) tanks that suffered the biggest losses in the Eastern Campaign - until the beginning of 1942, not one of those 820 Czech tanks that crossed the border of the USSR in June 1941 "reached out".

It seems that the 11th MK and the 7th Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht had approximately equal (if you do not take into account

the presence in the 11th MK of three dozen of the latest tanks) combat capabilities. No, this is a hasty and inherently erroneous conclusion. The 11th

mechanized corps was much stronger. "A tank is

a cart for a cannon." In this aphorism, the authorship of which is attributed to the outstanding Soviet designer of artillery systems Grabin, there is, of course, an element of exaggeration. But quite small. All parameters of the tank, no matter how important they may be in themselves, are secondary in relation to the main thing - weapons. The tank was created not for driving and not for shelter, but for destruction. Destruction of firepower and manpower, command posts and communication centers behind enemy lines, defeating transport columns and warehouses in the operational depth of his defense. So, to carry out these basic tasks of the tank troops, the 11th

MK was armed much better than the 7th Wehrmacht TD. Under our 20K tank gun, a high-explosive fragmentation projectile weighing 1.4 kg was developed. This, of course, is a very light projectile (five times lighter than the standard "three-inch"), but still it could hit some targets on the battlefield (machine gun nest, mortar battery, log dugout). And there were 20K 20K cannons in the 11th mechanized corps: 286 on BT and T-26 tanks and another 141 on cannon armored vehicles [78]. Total 427

trunks.

And the tanks of the 7th German TD are armed with a total of 167 tank guns of the Skoda A-7 company (German designation KwK-38). This is a 37 mm cannon, and the weight of the German 37 mm fragmentation projectile (610 g) was two times less than that of the corresponding Soviet 20K projectile, which led to a significantly lower damaging effect on infantry and enemy shelters. As for the light

German tankettes PZ-II, the projectile of the 20-mm cannon mounted on them was generally not suitable for fighting infantry and artillery. Such a caliber is the caliber of aviation and the lightest anti-aircraft guns. By the way, tests of Soviet air guns showed that the high-explosive fragmentation effect of 20-mm projectiles is so small that it is possible to hit the enemy's unprotected manpower only with a direct hit of such a "projectile" on a person [84]. Of course, serious "work" on fire suppression of the enemy should have been assigned not to light tanks, but to

artillery that was part of the tank units. And this is where the difference between the Soviet mechanized CORPS (even if understaffed) and the German DIVISION is mainly manifested.

In service with artillery regiments (plural) 11th MK, not counting anti-aircraft and anti-tank artillery, was [78]: - 16 howitzers of 152 mm caliber;  
- 36 howitzers of 122 mm caliber;  
- 21 guns of 76 mm , caliber. And in service with a single artillery regiment of a German tank division, fully staffed according to the state of autumn 1940, could only have: - 12 howitzers of 150 mm caliber;  
- 24 howitzers of 105 mm caliber;  
- 4 guns of 150 mm (or 105 mm) caliber. The general conclusion is obvious - the understaffed 11th MK in terms of its firepower significantly exceeded the largest German tank division.

Finally, there were more people in any Soviet mechanized corps than in any German tank division. Which is not surprising: there are three divisions in the corps and many separate corps units. More specifically, as of June 1, 1941, 21,605 personnel were serving in the 11th mechanized corps, and the maximum staff strength of a German tank division was one and a half times less. Moreover, 21,605 people were in the 11th MK as of June 1, 1941. By June 22, there could have been more people, since

covert mobilization of reservists was in full swing in the country (in total, 768 thousand people).

The only thing in which the 11th MK was inferior to the 7th TD of the enemy was in the number of vehicles, i.e. in the ability of motorized infantry, artillery and rear services to move after the advancing "tank wedge". 15% of the staff is "only" 775 vehicles. Not much. Two times less than in a Wehrmacht tank division fully equipped according to standard standards. And if the 11th mechanized corps really went on the offensive from Grodno to Merkin - Alytus

(70-90 km), as prescribed by Pavlov's order, then the "motorized infantry" not provided with transport would inevitably lag behind ...

But in reality, there was no "tactical breakthrough and turning it into an operational breakthrough", there was no need to chase the Germans - they themselves approached Grodno, and the 11th MK took its first and last battle almost in the pre-war deployment area. In such a situation, the shortage of cars could not be

so fatal. Moreover, from the aforementioned "political report" we learn that at dawn on June 22, the corps command made an absolutely correct decision: "... on alert, all units withdrew all personnel who were armed and able to fight, which amounted to 50-60

percent. of the entire composition, and the rest of the composition was left in the area of deployment of units ... Due to the lack of vehicles, the 204th medical unit of the 1st echelon from the Volkovysk region (82 km along the highway to Grodno. - M.S.) was transferred by motor vehicles, and the subsequent ones were transferred combined march. After 7 hours (29th TD after 3 hours and 33rd TD - after 4 hours) after the announcement of a combat alert, parts of the corps occupied the concentration area ... "In the future, we will see that this is exactly the case - according to the principle" less is better, better" - Rokossovsky (9th

MK), Feklenko (19th MK), Lelyushenko (2nd MK) acted, turning their understaffed corps into one full-fledged tank division. Thus, it turns out that Soviet historians were absolutely right. There was no "mechanized corps" in the Grodno region. Under the name "11th mechanized corps" by 10 o'clock in the morning on June 22,

1941, a division of light tanks was concentrated south of Grodno, surpassing the largest tank division of the Wehrmacht in all numerical parameters. The largest 7th Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht did a lot of trouble. Very detailed, truly "in German" memoirs of the commander of the 3rd Panzer Group G. Goth [13] allow us to trace in detail the combat path of the 7th TD in the first days

and weeks of the war.

**By** noon on June 22, the bridges over the Neman near Alytus (45 km from the border) were captured, early in the morning of June 23 in "extremely difficult

tank battle "the 5th Soviet tank division (3rd mechanized corps) that approached Alytus was defeated, at noon on June 23" the tank regiment of the 7th TD entered the Lida-Vilnius road (75 km east of Alytus. - M.S.), the division's wheeled vehicles were left far behind "(but what is remarkable is that the author of the memoirs does not at all conclude from this that the division has lost all combat capability and is only suitable for hunting sparrows), early in the morning of June 24" 7th TD after a small battle took possession the city of Vilnius ... the tank regiment of the division continued to advance towards Mikhlishki "(Mikhlishki is already Belarus, and already 180 km east of the border), then" the 7th TD, following in the head of the 39th Corps ... almost without a fight left on June 26 to the Minsk-Moscow highway in the Smolevichi area "(this is already 30 km east of Minsk). Thus, in five days the division covered 350 km along the forest roads of Lithuania and Belarus.

Then the 7th TD, having failed in an attempt to force the Berezina near the city of Borisov, went to the northeast, through Lepel to Vitebsk. On July 5, in the Beshenkovichi area (175 km from Minsk), the 7th TD "stumbled" on the full-fledged 7th MK that had approached from the Moscow Military District (this is the same mechanized corps in which Stalin's son fought and was captured). Having defeated and driven back the Soviet mechanized corps to the south, the 7th and 20th TD crossed the Western Dvina between Beshenkovichi and Ulla, by July 10 they completely captured Vitebsk, after which their roads diverged again: the 20th TD went to the northeast, to Velizh , and the 7th TD through Demidov for the second time entered the highway No. 1, this time in the Yartsev area (50 km east of Smolensk), thus breaking

two-thirds of the distance from the border to Moscow. Three months later, on October 6, 1941, it was the 7th tank in the Vyazma region that entered the highway No. 1 for the third time, thus closing the encirclement of the largest Vyazma pocket in the entire war. Then, during the bloody battle of Moscow, the 7th TD went another 245 km to the east, to Yakhroma (45 km north of the Moscow Ring Road). Only there, near the Volga-Moscow canal, was it (according to the famous report of the Sovinformburo of December 13, 1941) defeated by the troops of the 1st Shock Army. True, according to German data, the 7th Panzer fought on the Eastern an

Conclusion - a division of light tanks, it turns out, can fight, can attack, can fight successfully with both infantry and tanks

the enemy, can force full-flowing rivers and take large cities by storm. Sorry for the importunity, but the author considers it useful to remind once again that the 7th TD of the Wehrmacht traveled all this way on light Czech tanks and captured trucks, which on our "roads" turned from a motorized infantry vehicle into an object for pushing. Already in the first three weeks of the war, the 7th TD

traveled 700 km (counting in a straight line) from the border to Yartsevo, i.e. a little more than the distance from Grodno to Berlin. Did the 11th mechanized corps reach Berlin? And after all,

what is strange is that communist historians invariably considered natural, inevitable and the only possible one and the other: both the fact that the 7th German Panzer Division was already at Yartsev on July 15, and the fact that the 11th MK, which surpasses it in all respects ended its existence in three days of fighting near Grodno. Dear

reader, I fully share your outrage at the way this chapter is written. A long preface, a long list of tanks and guns, lengthy discussions... Where is the promised "detailed description" of

counterattacks? He is absent. One of three: either the author was too lazy to look well, or the documents were not preserved, or, by and large, there was no counterattack of the 11th mechanized corps. In the absence of something more, let's return to the "political report of the political department." The entire course of hostilities of the 11th MK is described in it verbatim as follows: "...

from the moment the German aircraft attacked Volkovysk at 4.00 22.6, there was no communication with the headquarters of the 3rd army and the headquarters of the district, and parts of the corps set out independently in the Grodno region, Sokulka, Indur, according to the developed cover plan ... (We replaced the details that were not related to the combat operations of the corps with ellipses. - M.S.) In connection with the withdrawal of the rifle units of the 4th sk, the entire burden of the hostilities fell on the units of the 11th microdistrict, as to cover the withdrawal of units of the 4th sk, and to delay the advance of the Germans; the motorized rifle regiment of the 29th TD, by order of the commander-3, was in its reserve for combating airborne assaults in the Grodno region, and the division fought without infantry and artillery, suffering particularly heavy losses from enemy anti-tank artillery. During the 22nd and 23.6 parts of the corps fought on the front Konyukha, Novy Dvor, Dombrovo. Under enemy pressure, by 24.6, p

Sokulka, holding the front west of the Grodno highway and the Grodno-Bialystok railway (30-70 km from the border. - M.S). In connection with the rapid retreat to the east from Grodno of the units operating north of the Neman River, the enemy tried to force the Neman River with the corps units reaching the rear. But all attempts by the Germans to force the Neman River were repulsed. To hold the advance of the enemy, by order of the army, on 26.6, two motorized battalions of 204 md were thrown across the Lunno to the line of the Kotra River. The 1st rifle battalion, on the orders of the corps commander, was thrown out to hold the bridge near Lun (30 km southeast of Grodno). The heavy losses suffered during the battles from 22 to 26.6, both by personnel and materiel, made the corps ineffective.

In tank divisions, no more than 300-400 people remained (i.e., no more than 5% of the initial number of personnel. - M.S), and in a motorized division - one incomplete battalion per regiment, tanks - up to 30 pcs. and up to 20 armored vehicles. All the small rear divisions were burned or shot down by enemy aircraft, which literally chased individual vehicles. Deputy commander of the 11th corps for political affairs, regimental commissar Andreev. That's all that Commissar Andreev could tell about the death of the corps. Maybe he didn't know everything himself. So, in the memoirs of G. Goth, there is a mention that on June 25-28 the German 19th TD in the Voronovo-Traby area (120 km north-east of Grodno. - M.S.) "was constantly attacked by the enemy with the support 50-ton tanks ... until June 28, she repelled attacks from the south." Most likely, these were KB tanks from the 29th TD, the unknown crews of which, after the defeat of the 11th mechanized corps, continued their war ... First of all, let's pay attention to what the "political report"

No.

Firstly, it does not contain even the slightest confirmation of V. Suvorov's delusional visions about how "Soviet tankers were shot even before they reached their tanks, and the tanks were burned or captured without crews." At the moment of the notorious "surprise attack", the commanders of the 11th MK, even without having any connection (!) With higher headquarters, simply took out "red packets" with cover plans from the safes and, as can be judged from the document, went into their intended deployment areas.



Secondly, the text does not contain any intelligible information about the enemy, in battles with which the corps lost 9/10 personnel and equipment in 4 days. But in this aspect, Commissar Andreev turned out to be much more decent than later historians and memoirists, who filled their waste books with descriptions of some "oncoming battles with heavy German tanks" that supposedly took place near Grodno. Thirdly, the command of the 11th MK, it seems, did not know anything either about the existence of KM G Boldin, or about the fact that a huge and powerful 6th mechanized corps was supposed to operate a few tens of kilometers south of Grodno. Now about what is

in the "political report". The poorly hidden claims against the infantry of the 4th SC, which opened the front and thereby forced the 11th mechanized corps to engage in an unusual business of "covering the withdrawal" and "delaying the advance of the Germans", are most likely justified. In the protocol of Pavlov's interrogation we read: "... in the afternoon

of June 22, Kuznetsov (commander of the 3rd Army), with a tremor in his voice, announced that only a number remained from the 56th Infantry Division (one of the three divisions of the 4th ..." [67]

In the report of the intelligence department of the headquarters of the 9th German army (June 23, 17 hours 40 minutes), two of the three divisions of the 4th SC: the 56th and 85th [ VIZH, 1989, No. 7]. Finally, on June 29, 1941, the commander of the

4th Rifle Corps, Major General Yegorov, himself surrendered (he actively collaborated with the Germans in captivity, was shot by the verdict of the Supreme Court on June 15, 1950, and has not been rehabilitated to this day) [20, 124]. The fact that the 11th mechanized

corps suffered "particularly heavy losses from enemy anti-tank artillery" is also confirmed by German documents. In the aforementioned report of the intelligence department of the headquarters of the 9th Army of the Wehrmacht we read:

"... strong tank groups (29th tank division and other units) counterattacked in the Grodno sector ... 180 tanks were knocked out on June 22, of which only the 8th infantry division destroyed 80 in the battles for Grodno tanks."

Since not a single formation of the 6th mechanized corps participated in the battles on June 22, this message can only apply to combat

actions of the 11th MK. Theoretically, such losses are possible. The 8th Infantry is a personnel division of the Wehrmacht of the "first wave", it fought from the first days of World War II, and the 37-mm anti-tank guns that were in its arsenal could penetrate the armor of our light tanks at a distance of one and a half kilometers. In theory.

Another thing is whether one can always believe such reports of losses. enemy?

Everything is relative. One of the most striking episodes of the battles in Belarus that went down in history forever was the battles on the northern approaches to Minsk, where the 100th and 64th rifle divisions of the 13th army stood in the way of the 39th tank corps of the Wehrmacht. For three days, in an atmosphere of general collapse and chaos, they held back the onslaught of the enemy. For courage and mass heroism shown in these battles, the divisions were the first in the Red Army to receive the title of guards (they became, respectively, the 1st and 7th guards divisions). So, in the report on the combat operations of the division, which was signed on June 30 by the commander of the 100th rifle division, Major General Russiyanov, it was said that the division destroyed 101 (one hundred and one)

tanks from the 7th German tank division. Yes, the very one that, according to Goth, "almost without a fight went out on June 26 to the Minsk-Moscow highway in the Smolevichi area." Most likely, Russiyanov made an inaccuracy, but in reality both his division and the neighboring 161st and 64th rifle divisions fought with the 20th division of the Wehrmacht (about which Goth writes that she "was forced to

break through the line with heavy fighting fortifications". For reference: before the start of the war, the 20th TD had 229 tanks, including 121 Czech PZ-38 (t), 31 German PZ-II, and even 44 antediluvian tankettes PZ-I with machine gun armament and engine 60 hp (in general, it must be admitted that selected

rubbish was collected in the Goth tank group.) What was written in the reports of the commanders of the 64th and 161st divisions, the author, unfortunately, does not know, but in the memoirs of the General of the Army SP. Ivanov (in those days - deputy chief of staff of the 13th Army), dozens of German tanks were mentioned, allegedly destroyed by soldiers of the 64th division. and it was still very, very early to talk about their defeat. That is why the author believes that the reports of the German commanders

infantry divisions about how they destroyed 180 Soviet tanks in one day must be approached with reasonable skepticism. The tanks of the 11th mechanized corps were, of course, lost, but it is not a fact that the German artillerymen have the right to account for this.

Concluding this very indistinct description of the combat operations of the 11th mechanized corps, we note only two indisputable facts:

- the enemy had to notice the impact of the 11th

MK; - an attempt to go on the offensive ended in the complete defeat of the corps, the loss of all equipment, most of the privates and commanders. On July 14, 1941, south of Bobruisk, only a group of several hundred people, led by the commander of the 11th MK, Major General Mostovenko, left the encirclement.

## **SV report. Borzilova**

Fortunately for historians, the combat path of the 6th mechanized corps is slightly better illuminated. A document survived in the bowels of the "archival Gulag" and became publicly available at the end of the 80s - a report by the commander of the 7th Panzer Division (6th MK), Major General SV. Borzilov to the Main Armored Directorate of the Red Army of August

4, 1941 [VIZH, 1988, No. 11]. It is necessary to say at least a few words about the author of this document separately. Semyon Vasilyevich Borzilov, by the time the Soviet-German war began, could rightfully be considered one of the most experienced and illustrious tank commanders of the Red Army. During the Finnish war, brigade commander Borzilov commanded the same 20th heavy tank brigade that broke through the "Mannerheim Line" in the area of "height 65.5" (see part 1). The command of the Red Army highly appreciated the role of the 20th tank brigade and its commander. The title of Hero of the Soviet Union was awarded

to 21 tankers, including Borzilov himself. The undoubted merit of the commander of the 20th TB should also include the very small losses suffered by the personnel of the unit entrusted to him. During three months of fighting in the most difficult natural and climatic conditions, his brigade lost 169 people killed and 338 wounded [8]. Nothing at all - in comparison with the fact t

The armies in that shameful Stalinist adventure exceeded 330 thousand people [35].

Borzilov's report, despite its small volume, contains so much valuable information that it is worth quoting in great detail: "... on June 22, 1941, the division was staffed in personnel: 98 percent of privates, 60 percent of junior commanding officers. and command staff by 80 percent. The material part: heavy tanks - 51, medium tanks - 150, BT-5/7 - 125, T-26 - 42 units ... reservation. - M.S.) ... parts of the division were in the main area of deployment of the Khoro - Novoselki - Zholtki metro station and were preparing for the exercise on June 23, 1941, which was to be conducted by the army headquarters ... (Another evidence that that at the end of June 1941 in the Western Special Military District, already officially transformed by the decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee of June 21, 1941 into the Western Front, they were preparing for a major "game." From other documents it is known that shortly before the start of this "game" in the tanks of the mechanized corps of the Western OVO were loaded with shells, the security of parks and warehouses was strengthened. It was ordered "to do everything without fuss, not to tell anyone about it, to continue studies according to plan. " - M.S.) On June 22 at 2 o'clock a password was received through a delegate communications about a combat alert with the opening of the "red package". (Another confirmation that the combat alert on the Western Front was announced BEFORE the "surprise attack." The same time of receipt of the order to open the "red package" with the operational plan - 2 am on June 22 - is also contained in the memoirs of the commander of the 86th 10th Rifle Division, Army of the Western Front, Colonel Zashibalov. - M.S.) ... After 10 minutes, a combat alert was announced to units of the division, and at 0430, units of the division concentrated at the assembly point for combat alert ... at 22 hours on June 22, the division received an order to move to a new concentration area - st. Valp and the subsequent task: to destroy the tank division that had broken through to the Bialystok area ... The division, following the order, encountered traffic jams created on all roads due to the disorderly retreat of the rear of the army from Bialystok. The division, being on the march and in the area of concentration from 04:00 to 09:00 and from 11:00 to 14:00 on June 23, was under enemy air strikes all the time. For the p

before 14:00 the division had losses: 63 tanks were knocked out, all rears of the regiments were destroyed [8]. (Comparable losses were also suffered by the 4th Panzer Division of the 6th MK. In one of the few surviving reports of its commander, Potaturchev, it is said that by 18.00 on June 24, the division concentrated in the Lebezhany-Novaya Mysh area, with losses of up to 20-26%, mainly due to light tanks; heavy KB tanks, as indicated in the report, even withstood direct hits by air bombs. - M.S.) [8] ... The enemy tank division was not in the Bielsk area, due to which the division was not used ... (Translated from Russian into Russian, this means that the entire first day of the war, the division was simply inactive. On the second day, it was sent by the commander of the 10th Army Golubev, as a result of panic reports from his subordinates, to the south to Velsk, i.e. in the exact opposite from Grodno in the direction. There were simply no enemy tank units in the zone of the 10th Army, and therefore Borzilov could not find them. This, however, did not prevent Boldin, even in his post-war memoirs, from mentioning "a large number of tanks" that attacked the southern flank of the 10th Army. th army. - M.S.) On June 24-25, the division, following the order of the corps commander and marshal Comrade Kulik, struck from the line of Old Dubno - Kuznitsa on Grodno (here is finally the first mention of the participation of the 7th TD in the planned counterattack on Grodno) , where up to two battalions of infantry and up to two artillery batteries of the enemy were destroyed, while parts of the division lost 18 tanks burned out and stuck in the swamps ... "(This is where the description of the counterattack of the 6th mechanized corps ends.

Then begins the description of the defeat).

"... By the end of the day on June 25, an order was received from the corps commander to withdraw beyond the Svisloch River ... (This order, probably the last in his life, Khatskilevich gave, following the order of the commander of the Western Front Pavlov, who on June 25 at 16 hours 45 minutes ordered: "Immediately interrupt the battle and forced march, following night and day, concentrate in Slonim. On the beginning of the movement on the morning of the 26th and the end of the march, report. Radio about the state of fuel and ammunition. " In turn, Pavlov made such a decision on based on the directive of the Headquarters and its representative at the headquarters of the Western Front, Marshal Shaposhnikov, on the withdrawal of all front troops to the line of the Shchara River, i.e. 100-150 km to the east.

further it becomes obvious that the order to withdraw only "legitimized" the disorderly flight that had begun. - M.S.) According to preliminary data, on the night of June 26, the 4th TD of the 6th mechanized corps retreated beyond the Svisloch River, as a result of which the flank of the 36th Cavalry Division was opened ... At 9 pm on June 26, unit 36 The 1st cd and the 29th motorized rifle division (6th mechanized corps) randomly began to retreat. I took measures to restore the situation, but this was not successful. I gave the order

to cover the retreating units (here, as we see, Borzilov literally repeats the political report of the 11th mechanized corps. - M.S), the 29th medical and 36th cd and in the area of Cape Krinki made a second attempt to delay the retreating units, where managed to detain the 128th SME (this is not the enemy, this is our regiment from the 6th mechanized corps, everything is trying to detain Borzilov. - M.S), and on the night of June 27 he crossed the river. Svisloch east of Cape Krinki, which was the beginning of a general disorderly retreat ... On

June 29 at 11 o'clock, with the remnants of materiel (3 vehicles) and a detachment of infantry and cavalry, he approached the forests east of Slonim, where he fought on June 29 and 30. On June 30, at 10 p.m., he moved with a detachment into the forests and

further to the Pinsk swamps along the route Gomel - Vyazma ... all the materiel was left on the territory occupied by the enemy, from Bialystok to Slonim. Abandoned materiel was rendered unusable. The material part was left due to the lack of fuel and lubricants and a repair fund ... "

Yeah ... Let's take a breath and try to start with the simplest ones, i.e. arithmetic results. By the beginning of

hostilities, the 7th TD had 368 tanks. The notorious "surprise attack" did not cause any damage to Borzilov's division. Even before the start of the first air raids, the division left the place of permanent deployment and did not suffer any tangible losses on June 22. During the offensive battle on June 24-25, the division lost only 18 tanks, and even then not all of them were hit by German anti-tank artillery - several vehicles, as the divisional commander writes, simply got stuck in the swamps. Borzilov in his report does not specify which

tanks were lost. Nevertheless, knowing the capabilities of the anti-tank artillery of the German infantry divisions, it is possible to

It is reliable to assume that the main strike force of the division - the latest T-34 and KB tanks - remained in service (on the 90-mm armor of the heavy KB tank, the shells of any German anti-tank guns could only leave more or less noticeable dents).

Even taking into account the fact that 63 tanks were lost on the march, by the morning of June 26 - that is, by the beginning of the rout - no less than 287 tanks should have remained in the 7th tank. None of the seventeen tank divisions of the Wehrmacht had such a number of tanks on June 22, 1941 (on average, there were 192 tanks per division, and in five divisions of the 1st Kleist tank group there were from 143 to 149 tanks), nor one did not have tanks of such quality as the T-34 and KB, of which there were hundreds in Borzilov's division!

And after three days of retreat, with virtually no contact with the enemy (and the German infantry, with all their desire, could not catch up with the retreating motorized army), the entire 7th Panzer Division was left with "an infantry detachment with three tanks."

What is fantasy? Or just a story of a stampede of a demoralized crowd, sweeping away even those who tried to stop it in its path?

However, Borzilov's report also indicated two objective (at first glance) reasons for the defeat of the division and the loss of all materiel - the lack of fuel and lubricants and the continuous strikes of enemy aircraft.

In Boldin's memoirs, as you remember, the reasons why his troops were left without fuel were also named: German aircraft burned all the warehouses and bombed all the railway echelons with fuel.

It would seem - what else is there to argue about? No fuel - no combat-ready mechanized corps. But let's not rush to conclusions, but rather ask ourselves two simple questions.

How many warehouses with fuel and lubricants on the territory of Belarus were at the disposal of the Guderian and Guderian tank groups in June 1941? The logical answer is: if the German aircraft bombed all the warehouses, then not a single one. There is also a correct answer - the Germans took up to one third of all gasoline consumed from the "burnt warehouses"

of the Western Front! [40] How many trainloads of fuel did the German panzer divisions receive in June 1941? Even without opening a single reference book, you can give an exact answer - not a single one. The fact is that

German wagons do not run on our wide gauge, and the "re-shifting" to the narrow European gauge in June 1941 has not yet begun.

Nevertheless, by the end of June, the 2nd Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht reached Bobruisk (500 km from the area of initial deployment), and the 3rd Panzer Group traveled 450 km along the route Suwalki - Vilnius - Minsk - Borisov. At the same time, neither Goth nor Guderian mention in their memoirs a single word about any problems with providing parts with fuel! And this despite the fact that the cruising range of German tanks was one and a half to two times less than that of our T-34s and BTs. And there is absolutely nothing to be

surprised at. Tanks in a deep offensive operation are refueled not in "warehouses", and even more so - not from railway tanks.

"... I will read out a very small reference. In total, in order to provide combat vehicles for a 500 km march, 1200 tons of fuel are needed for refueling. Based on this norm, for a day of combat work with a march of 125 km, the provision of combat vehicles for a day will require 300 tons ...

... in any case, enough fuel should be taken to fully ensure the fulfillment of two or four days of work and the assigned task ... In addition to full refueling in cars, we recommend taking at least half a filling for each car in cans and tanks ...

... there is nothing to be shy about and take cans and kegs on top of the tank. If we used to be afraid that cans of gasoline would ignite when hit by incendiary bullets, now diesel fuel does not burn, and it is impossible to ignite it with any incendiary bullet ... This gives us the right to put some fraction of diesel fuel in tanks and be able to fuel it most productively fuel..." [14] This is not belated advice from an amateur. This is a quotation from Pavlov's report at the December (1940)

meeting, which we have repeatedly mentioned. The figure of 1200 tons does not seem so huge to us if we remember that according to the state of the mechanized corps it was supposed to have 5165 vehicles for various purposes, including 139 fuel tankers in each of the two tank divisions.

Pavlov proposed to take fuel when entering the mechanized corps into the breakthrough, based on 2-3 full refueling of tanks.



This aroused justified objections. Major General Kurkin (at that time - the commander of the 5th Panzer Division, and at the beginning of the war - the commander of the 3rd MK of the North-Western Front) allowed himself to object to the army general: "This is not our creative thought, but the order of the people's commissar decided so the question is that we will now have 4-5 fuel stations on wheeled vehicles ... "That is, not in warehouses, but directly in marching columns! And now

let's translate these same "gas stations" into more understandable kilometers for

everyone. The most outdated T-26 tank available in the Borzilov division had a cruising range at one gas station equal to 170 km. The most powerful and modern KB is the same 180 km (it's hard to carry 50 tons of steel). High-speed BTs and medium T-34s had a cruising range of about 300 kilometers.

To clarify: these are the minimum figures, and they refer to the movement of tanks over rough terrain. When driving on roads, the power reserve increases by one and a half to two times.

Thus, even two "gas stations" are already 350-500 km of the way. And at five gas stations, Kurkin's corps could reach Paris on good European roads (only 1,600 km from Kaunas). Let us return,

however, from the plans of the Great Campaign to the tragic reality. According to the plan of the command of the 6th MK, it was supposed to strike from Bialystok to Grodno with an exit by the end of the day on June 24 to the area of crossings across the Neman at Merkine - Druskininkai. This is 120 km in a straight line. Even taking into account combat maneuvering, this task could be completed without refueling anywhere at all, only due to the fuel that was in the tanks of the tanks.

In fact, the 7th Panzer Division, circling randomly along the route Bialystok - Valpa - Sokulka - Volkovysk - Slonim, did not cover more than 250 km. Mainly - along the roads, and not at all through forests and swamps. At the same time, it would be possible to abandon all the equipment "due to the lack of fuel and lubricants" only if the following two unfavorable conditions were simultaneously combined: - until 10 pm on June 22

(i.e. before the start of the march), the tanks were still not filled with fuel "under the cork" and went on the march with half-empty tanks;

- there was simply no fuel in the district, the 10th Army and in the mechanized corps, or all its reserves in the district warehouses and in the rear of the division were

destroyed by correspond reality such the ubiquitous

German aviation. Can guesses? Let's start with the first one. In accordance with the "Plan of Action for Troops to Cover the Mobilization, Concentration and Deployment of District Troops", approved by Pavlov in early June 1941, "the need for fuel is provided by: two gas stations stored in units (one in tanks of vehicles, the second in containers ), three gas stations for military vehicles and six gas stations for vehicles stored in district

warehouses" [VIZH, 1996, No. 3]. Of course, not all orders are executed exactly and on time, there are also cases of criminal sloppiness, but this could hardly apply to Borzilov, whose brigade was noted for the exemplary organization of the logistics service during the Finnish war [8].

Now about the availability of fuel in the district warehouses. From the already mentioned "Plan of cover ..." we learn that in the area of the failed counterattack of KMG Boldin, in the Bialystok-Grodno-Volkovysk triangle, there were 12 (twelve) stationary fuel depots. Specifically: No.

920, 923, 924, 922, 1019, 1018, 1040, 1044 in the band of the 10th Army and 919, 929, 1020, 1033 in the area of deployment of the 11th mechanized corps (Grodno - Mosty -

Volkovysk). The distances between these warehouses did not exceed 60–80 km. Even for a dilapidated "lorry" is no more than two hours drive.

But maybe there were warehouses, but there was no gasoline on them? Back in the most "stagnant years", the Military Historical Journal, published by the USSR Ministry of Defense, informed readers that: "... by

June 29, more than 60 district warehouses remained on the territory of Belarus occupied by the enemy, including ... 25 fuel depots ... Total losses by this time amounted to: ammunition - over 2,000 wagons (30% of all stocks of the front), fuel - more than 50,000 tons (50% of stocks) ... "[VIZH, 1966, No. 8 ]

A well-known psychological paradox is that a glass of 100 ml of liquid is called "half empty" by some people, and "half full" by others. Communist "historians" (unlike ordinary people) always spoke and wrote about the lost "50% of the fuel supply", but never paid the attention of gullible readers to the fact that even on June 29, half of the pre-war reserves were still at the disposal of the troops of the Western Front fuel, i.e. about 50,000 tons of gasoline and diesel fuel. Which, at least ten times, exceeded the need for fuel for four fully equipped mechanized corps

for a 500 km march (see above). But four fully equipped mechanized corps (i.e. 4000 tanks) were not in the district even on June 22. According to various sources, the

number of tanks that were part of the ZapOVO troops at the beginning of the war did not exceed 2,500 units. By June 29, 1941, the number of "consumers" of fuel in the district had drastically decreased. How could they lack 50,000 tons of fuel?

But if problems with fuel can still be somehow explained by many days of chaotic marches along roads crowded with refugees and fugitives, then how could Boldina's KMG, which did not engage in battle with the main enemy forces, be left without ammunition?

The minimum ammunition load of the BT tank is 132 rounds, 147 rounds in the T-26 tank, 116 shells in the KB, 77 shells in the "thirty-four".

The total ammunition capacity of the tanks of the 6th mechanized corps was about 105

thousand shells. This is the minimum, and this is only in tanks. And in the corps there were 229 cannon armored vehicles and 335 "barrels" of cannons, howitzers and mortars of various calibers [78]. If all this had actually fallen on two infantry divisions of the Wehrmacht within two days, then they would hardly have been able to advance somewhere after that. With a pace of 20 - 30 km per day.

However, even if one hundred thousand shells were not enough to at least slow down the advance of 30 thousand German soldiers, then one could add.

"About 6,700 wagons were accumulated in the district warehouses ammunition of various types.

This is a line from the already mentioned study "Rear of the Western Front" [VIZH, 1966, No. 8]. Modern military historians clarify that this is not at all as much as it may seem to amateurs - only 85% of the norm established by the General Staff [3].

Installed for the first two months of hostilities. How could this be enough for five days?

Here, pressed against the wall, the communist "historians" habitually pull out their favorite, their universal, magic "magic wand".

### **fire from the sky**

Aviation. Almighty German Air Force. It was she who destroyed thousands of Soviet tanks, burned all the tank trucks, bombed 6700 wagons with ammunition, destroyed 60 district warehouses with fuel and shells, "disheveled" the 36th and defeated the 6th cavalry division, and at the same time also managed to "shoot literally every one of our car" (the commander of the 4th Army, General Korobkov, said in his last word at the trial) and with her terrible rumble prevented Boldin from giving orders by phone and so on, so on, so on ...

Whenever our military "historians" have to explain another defeat, collapse, another loss of people and equipment, failure to follow orders and disruption of all plans, it appears - the "indestructible and legendary" German aviation. Of all the myths about the

beginning of the war, this one is both the most absurd and the most rooted. Any Marivanna from the Department of Contemporary History, unable to distinguish a cartridge from a pontoon and a tank from a truck, tells her students that "German aviation seized air supremacy from the first days of the war," with the same unreasoning certainty with which she explains to her grandchildren about listening to mom and dad. It is difficult to argue with the general delusion, but let's

try. To begin with, let's listen to people who know war and military aviation

firsthand.

"... On June 25, Soviet troops as part of the 11th and 6th mechanized corps inflicted a counterattack on the enemy in the Grodno region. They called from Mogilev to tell our division to everyone

took part in this operation. In the evening, I learned from a representative of the front headquarters who arrived at our place: in addition to us, the counterattack is supported by regiments of the 12th bomber and 43rd fighter divisions, as well as the 3rd long-range bomber aviation corps, commanded by Colonel I.S. Skripko (now Air Marshal). On this sector of the front, the aviators then made 780 sorties, destroyed about 30 tanks, 16 guns and up to 60 vehicles with manpower. Success inspired us..." [49] What is the main

noteworthy thing about this testimony? Not even by the fact that, it turns out, not only German aircraft hung in the air over the area of KMG Boldin's failed counterattack, but with his last phrase. The destruction of 30 tanks

and 60 vehicles as a result of 780 sorties is estimated by the author of the memoirs as a major, inspiring success! At the same time, let's not forget that these figures were taken "from the air", i.e. from the reports of the pilots themselves, and not at all from the journals of the combat losses of the German divisions. The degree of reliability of these reports is well known to aviation historians. The real losses of the enemy were, of course, two times less.

And this is regarded as a great success? Who is the author? Maybe he understands the issues of combat use of aviation worse than

Maryivanna? Hero of the Soviet Union, commander of the 13th bomber air division (13th BAD), Major General F.P. Polynin became known to the entire aviation world even before the start of World War II. True, in accordance with the norms of top secrecy then adopted in the Soviet Union, Polynin was known in absentia and without a surname, simply as the commander of the "same" bomber formation that bombed the Japanese air base on the island of Taiwan on February 23, 1938.

An unprecedented raid 800 km long over the territory of China occupied by the Japanese was organized and carried out by Polynin in such a way that the Japanese air defense not only failed to provide any resistance, but did not even detect the very fact of the passage of 28 Soviet bombers. After the

war in China, in which Polynin participated intermittently since 1933, he became the commander of the Air Force of the 13th Army during the Finnish war. During that war, the Soviet military

Aviation (the number of which in the theater by February 1940 exceeded 3,200 aircraft) completed 84,000 sorties. This figure is comparable to the indicators of the use of aviation in the largest battles of the Great Patriotic War (the Battle of Kursk - 118 thousand sorties from July 5 to August 23, 1943 and the Battle of Stalingrad - 114 thousand sorties from July 42 to February 43) [60 ].

The war that began on June 22, 1941 was the third in a row for Polynin, and hardly any of the commanders of the German bomber air groups had more combat experience than him by that day.

Now let's read the pages of the memoirs of Air Marshal (in those days - the commander of the aforementioned 3rd long-range bomber air corps) N.S. Skripko. [50].

Already at 10 am on June 22, his corps received an order to concentrate all forces to defeat the enemy's motorized columns in the Suwalki-Alytus area. The first bombing attack on units of the 3rd Panzer Group was carried out by our pilots on June 22 at 15:40, in the Merkin area. In total, on that day, the forces of three bomber regiments (96th, 207th and 98th) carried out one and a half hundred sorties against Goth's tank divisions. June 24, as N.S. writes in his

memoirs Skripko, "the combat mission of the 3rd Air Corps remained the same - to destroy German tanks and motorized units of the Gota group, advancing directly on Minsk." On that day, its pilots completed 170 sorties. On June 26, when German tanks reached the northern outskirts of Minsk, the pilots of the 3rd Air Corps flew 254 sorties, supporting the rifle divisions defending Minsk. It was on this day, June 26, 1941, attacking a column of troops of the 3rd tank group on the Molodechno-Minsk highway near the town of Radoshkovichi, that Captain Nikolai Frantsevich Gastello, commander of the 4th squadron of the 207th air regiment, combat veteran, accomplished his immortal feat in Finland and Khalkhin Gol. As you can see, Soviet aviation was by no means idle. Every day,

the motorized columns of the 3rd tank group of G. Hoth were hit by hundreds of sorties, but it (the Wehrmacht tank group) did not disappear anywhere, but continued to move forward almost non-stop. Moreover, in Goth's memoirs there are almost no traces of these bombings, except for one single

phrases in the entry dated June 24: "in the following days, enemy aviation activities intensified." That's all. Goth complains about bad roads, dust, forest fires, torrential July rains much more often and more extensively.

The reader, brought up by Soviet writers, has already understood everything. Our planes were "hopelessly outdated coffins", the pilots - "with a flight time of six hours" (only Polynin, probably, could fly, and he didn't fly, but commanded) - that's why Soviet aviation strikes made a big impression on G. Goth did not produce. For the sake

of truth, it should be noted that people with big stars at first had a similar opinion about the effectiveness of Soviet aviation in the first days of the war. Thus, the Headquarters in Directive No. 00285 of July 11, 1941 noted that "our aviation operated mainly against the mechanized and tank troops of the Germans. Hundreds of aircraft entered the battle with tanks, but the desired effect was not achieved, because the fight of aviation against tanks was poorly organized" [5, p. 63]. This Directive was signed by Chief of the General Staff Zhukov. In this particular case, Army General

Zhukov made a mistake. The reason for the lack of a "proper effect" was not only and not so much "poor organization". In what also it was necessary to be convinced in one and a half month. On August 28, 1941, Supreme

Commander-in-Chief I. Stalin personally ordered (order No. 0077) "in order to disrupt the operation of the enemy tank grouping in the Bryansk direction, during August 28-31, an operation should be carried out by the Air Force of the fronts and aviation of the Civil Code reserve ... in total, the operation should to participate 450 combat aircraft..." [5, p.146]. The operation

of the "enemy tank group" is the same turn of the 2nd tank group of Guderian from Moscow to Kiev direction, the expediency of which was argued in their post-war memoirs by all the surviving German generals.

Comrade Stalin's instructions were overfulfilled. The air operation (one of the largest in the entire initial period of the war) involved 464 combat aircraft (230 bombers, 55 attack aircraft, 179 fighters) [27].

The course of the operation to defeat the "scoundrel Guderian" (this is how the commander of the Bryansk Front, Stalin's favorite, Lieutenant-General Yeremenko, expressed himself in those days) with relentless attention. The Deputy Commander of the Red Army Air Force, Major General I.F. Petrov. September 4, 1941 Stalin sends the following to the Bryansk

Front

telegram:

"Bryansk. Eremenko for Petrov. Aviation is working well ... I wish you success. Hello to all pilots. I. Stalin" [27]. The next day,

September 5, Stalin's greetings were supplemented by the decision of the Headquarters to transfer two more attack aviation regiments and two fighter regiments to the Petrov group. The task is the same: "to defeat and destroy Guderian to the ground" [5, p. 164]. In just 6 days of operation,

Soviet aviation then completed about 4000 sorties [27]. Result? It

was not

possible to defeat and destroy to the ground, the 2nd Panzer Group defeated the troops of the Bryansk Front, then the right wing of the Southwestern Front and, after fighting 300 km, closed the encirclement ring of the "Kiev pocket" on September 15-17. Moreover, the "scoundrel Guderian" on the seventeen pages of his memoirs dedicated to the breakthrough of the 2nd Wehrmacht Panzer Group in the rear of the Southwestern Front, devoted exactly three

words to the actions of our aviation: "... On August 29, large enemy forces, with the support of aviation, undertook with south and west offensive against the 24th tank corps. The corps was forced to suspend the offensive of the 3rd Panzer and 10th Motorized Divisions..." [65]

"How so? - the reader will exclaim in bewilderment, imagining the war according to newspaper articles "on the occasion of the anniversary", in which the pilots of the "N-sky regiment" click German tanks again and again like seeds. "Four thousand sorties with no noticeable results? It can't be!"

And everything is very simple. It's just that this was the real effectiveness of aviation weapons of that era.



Already in the next year, 1942, as experience in combat operations was accumulated, this very "efficiency" was specified in numbers. In 1942,

the Operational Directorate of the Main Headquarters of the Air Force of the KA established in tentative calculations of the "norms of combat capabilities" of the Il-2 attack aircraft that to destroy one light tank, it is necessary to send 4-5 Il-2 aircraft, and to destroy one medium tank of the PZ-IV type, PZ-III or StuG-III will require 12-15 sorties! [86, 87] In other words, the destruction of German tank groups in the summer of 1941 required not hundreds or even thousands, but tens of thousands of "well organized" sorties. Moreover, the regulations referred to the specialized Il-2 attack aircraft, and not at all about the "horizontal" (as they were then called) SB or DB bombers. Even a graduate of a culinary

college should understand that in order to destroy a tank, you must first hit it, and if you hit it, pierce its armor, and so pierce it that the "armor effect" is sufficient to destroy the crew and mechanisms. How and how could a combat aircraft of 1941 do this?

Let's start with task number one - aiming.

Everyone saw an anti-tank gun. If not on the battlefield, then at least in the park of culture and recreation. A long, long barrel (so that the projectile accelerates in it to a speed of three speeds of sound) rests on a massive steel frame. For greater stability, the entire structure is equipped with two long "paws" that rest against the ground before firing. The gunner of the artillery crew does nothing else but point the barrel at the target with the help of an optical sight and screws, which are called micrometer screws. And here is an Il-2 attack aircraft on a pedestal at the

entrance to the city of Samara. The pilot's cabin accommodates one person. In addition to aiming, he has many other things to do in battle: feet on the turn pedals, his right hand on the altitude and roll control knob, his left hand controls the engine, it's not clear what the pilot sets the desired propeller pitch, changes the supercharger operation mode, controls the radiator flaps, monitors the situation in the air, gives orders

subordinate (if he is a flight commander) and dodges fire

anti-aircraft guns.

Two VYA-23 rapid-fire cannons are not located on a massive frame, but on a wing experiencing complex flexural-torsional deformation, aiming is carried out "with the whole body", according to the aiming marks on the windshield. Is it possible to get somewhere

in such conditions? Can. But only very, very rarely. So, during field tests (i.e., in the absence of enemy opposition) at the NIP of Air Force Aviation Arms, "three pilots of the 245th Shap, who had combat experience, were able to achieve only 9 hits in the tank with a total ammunition consumption of 300 shells for the ShVA K cannons and 1290 cartridges for ShKAS machine guns. Getting into the tank is just the beginning. We need to break through his

armor protection. There are even more problems with this. It was experimentally established that the best conditions for aiming were created with a gentle dive at an angle of 30 degrees to the horizon from a height of 500-700 meters. Under such conditions, shells almost always ricocheted even if they hit the tank's armor.

"... out of 62 hits on German medium tanks received during field firing from the air, there was only one through penetration (in 10 mm thick armor), one core jam, 27 hits in the undercarriage that did not cause significant damage, the rest were shell hits gave either dents or ricochets ... "

The best (i.e., lowest performing) performance was obtained during firing ranges of light German tanks.

"... out of 53 hits received during 15 sorties, only in 16 cases was a through penetration of armor received, in 10 cases dents in the armor and ricochets were received, the rest of the hits fell on the undercarriage. At the same time, hitting a 23-mm armor-piercing projectile into the undercarriage of the tank did not damage him

inflicted ... "

But even when firing light tanks, "all 16 through holes in the armor of the tanks hit attacks at a glide angle of 5–10, an approach height of 100 m, a firing distance of 300–400 m" [85, 86, 87].

And under such conditions, the firing time is reduced to one or two seconds, which was practically unacceptable for pilots of average qualification.

How then did the Luftwaffe pilots kill a thousand tanks of the 6th and 11th mechanized corps? Maybe it was only we who had such bad planes and weak guns, and the Germans had it all differently?

Quite right. The German aircraft guns had completely different parameters. Against the background of our 23-mm Volkov-Yartsev gun, the main German MG-FF air gun in June 1941 looks like an eared Zaporozhets against the background of the 600th

Merc. Our VYA-23 was originally developed as a means of combating protected ground targets. A very heavy (by aviation standards) 66-kilogram gun accelerated a projectile weighing 200 g to a speed of 900 meters per second.

The MG-FF cannon of the Swiss company Oerlikon, which was in service with German fighters and attack aircraft, was much smaller and three times lighter. But all good things come at a price. The low weight of the "Oerlikon" was due to the low muzzle energy (both this gun and the "Mauser" MG-151 that replaced it were a heavy machine gun, the 13-mm cartridge of which was supposed to disperse the 20-mm projectile). The Oerlikon armor-piercing projectile weighed only 115 g and had an initial speed of only 585 meters per second, that is, it had kinetic energy (namely, it is due to it that the armor is pierced) four times less than the VYa-23 projectile. The "devilish" gun, developed by Volkov and Yartsev, was so ahead of its time that after the war, self-propelled anti-aircraft guns were designed for ballistics and the VYa-23 cartridge, which are still in service with many armies of the world! [84]

Of course, the armament of combat aircraft of the Second World War was not limited to light small-caliber guns alone. There were also bombs of various calibers (the most common were high-explosive fragmentation bombs weighing 100-250 kg). Of course, a direct hit by such a bomb was enough to disable a light or even a medium tank (a heavy KB, as noted in the report of the commander of the 4th TD Potaturchev, even withstood a direct hit). Yes, but how, by throwing an unguided bomb, you can achieve this very "direct hit", if such a point and

a moving target, which is a tank, is almost impossible to hit even with a cannon? The accuracy of bombing from conventional "horizontal" (as they were called, in contrast to diving) bombers depended very much on the flight altitude, visibility conditions, and crew qualifications. In any case, getting into a circle with a diameter of 200-300 meters was considered an excellent result, not accessible to everyone, even in a calm environment of the training ground. In battle, under fire from enemy anti-aircraft guns, everything became much more complicated. Suffice it to say that numerous attempts to destroy bridges by the efforts of both Soviet and German bombers were most often unsuccessful. But even the smallest railway bridge is much larger than the largest tank. Moreover, the bridge, unlike the tank, stands still and does not move anywhere. Significantly higher accuracy of bombing

was provided by dive bombers. Undoubtedly, the most successful aircraft in this class was the German Junker Ju-87, this famous symbol of the blitzkrieg, without which not a single photo-movie-television report about the beginning of the war can do. Piloted by an experienced and physically hardy pilot (G-force at the exit from a dive reached 5-6 units), the Ju-87 could provide bombing accuracy of plus or minus 30 meters. This is an excellent indicator for fighting infantry, artillery, and enemy motorcades. But to destroy a

medium tank, and even more so a heavy Soviet KB with its 90 mm armor, it was not enough to place a bomb 30 meters from the target. What is needed is a direct hit, which even the diving "Junker" could achieve only by rare chance. This is confirmed by the reports of the German pilots themselves: "... during October 4, Ju-87s made 202 sorties in the Bryansk-Spas-Demensk region, destroying 22 tanks, 450 vehicles and 3 fuel storages ... October 7, Ju-87s

from S1G2 in groups of 25-30 aircraft continuously attacked the encircled troops ... in one day they destroyed about 20 tanks, 34 guns and about 650 vehicles ... "The reliability of these figures is the same as that of all other military reports (postscripts in reports of the Luftwaffe bloomed exuberant terry

color), but you should pay attention to the ratio of "destroyed in the report" tanks and vehicles.

World War II was a tank war. And both sides, of course, tried to somehow increase the "anti-tank capabilities" of their combat aircraft. By the beginning of

the Battle of Kursk in the Soviet Union, mass production was launched and the tactics of using PTABs were developed: tiny (weighing 1.5 kg) anti-tank bombs with a shaped charge capable of burning through 60-mm armor (developed at TsKB-22 under the leadership of I.A. Larionov). The Il-2 attack aircraft took 192 PTABs into flight in 4 cassettes (48 pieces in each). When dropped from a height of 200 m, the total affected area occupied a strip of 15x190 meters, in which theoretically guaranteed destruction of any Wehrmacht armored vehicles [87].

The Germans took a completely different path. They removed all bomb racks from the dive Junkers and hung a huge (by aviation standards) Flak-18 37-mm anti-aircraft gun under the fuselage, which theoretically could penetrate the armor of the Soviet thirty-four with a special projectile with a tungsten carbide core. In the first days of the grand battle of Orel and Kursk, both sides

reported incredible success in the use of new weapons. On July 7, all three squadrons of dive bombers (StG1, StG2, StG77), pulled to the Kursk Bulge,

completed 946 sorties, destroying 44 Soviet tanks, 20 guns and 50 vehicles. On July 8, having completed 889 sorties, German attack aircraft destroyed 88 tanks, 5 guns and 40 vehicles. Thus, this

record for the entire war, the effectiveness of the use of anti-tank aircraft reached the level of Soviet standards of 10 sorties per destroyed

tank.

The massive and tactically sudden use of PTABs gave (according to the reports it gave!) An even more amazing result. Attack pilots of the 3rd and 9th air corps by the end of the day on July 6 reported that up to 90 enemy armored vehicles were destroyed or damaged by PTABs. On the morning of July 7, in the Oboyan direction, the 1st assault

the air corps in two groups of 46 and 33 aircraft struck a very large (up to 350 units) accumulation of enemy tanks.

Deciphering photographs of the battlefield showed the presence of 200 (!!!) wrecked German tanks and self-propelled guns.

According to other reports, the SS Panzer Division "Totenkopf" allegedly lost 270 armored vehicles (tanks, self-propelled guns and armored personnel carriers) from air strikes. True, on the eve of the Battle of Kursk there were 130 tanks in this division, including 15 "tigers".

Having reduced the figures in the reports by four to five times (otherwise we will have to admit that only the ghosts of tanks participated on both sides in the tank battle near Prokhorovka), we come to the conclusion that the effectiveness of the fight between aviation and tanks by the end of the war still increased significantly. But before the turning point in the confrontation between the aircraft and the armor was still very far

away. Recovering from the first shock, the German tankers switched to operations in dispersed marching and combat formations, which immediately reduced the effectiveness of the use of PTABs.

And the German "wonder weapon" (a diving aircraft with an anti-aircraft gun on board) required a pilot with an exceptionally high flying ability (it was necessary to exit the dive at an altitude of 400-500 m, i.e. two or three seconds before hitting the ground) and rifle training. It is not surprising that, in general, the losses of Soviet medium tanks were distributed throughout the war as follows: from enemy artillery fire - 88%, from mines - 8% and from aviation - only 4%! [84, p. 110] It took a fundamental revolution in weapons technology, associated with

the advent of the helicopter and guided missiles, before aviation became the most dangerous opponent of tanks. But this is a completely different story of other wars of a different era ... And in June 1941, the only way to increase the effectiveness of air attacks against tanks

could only be a huge massing of forces. An example of such massing is the events described by Polynin on June 26, when five air divisions were thrown at once against the 3rd Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht! And the result achieved that day - 30 destroyed German tanks - could rightfully be considered a major success. Also a huge success, marked by the greeting of Stalin himself, could be considered the report

commander of the Bryansk Front Eremenko about the destruction of "100 tanks, more than 800 vehicles, 290 wagons, 20 armored vehicles" during the above-mentioned largest operation of the Red Army Air Force [27]. Most likely, behind the line of this report, after all, there was the destruction of several dozen tanks and vehicles of the Guderian group ...

Having done with this forcedly lengthy digression from the main topic, let's move on to the main question: what kind of aviation forces could the enemy "massively" use against Soviet tanks from Boldin's cavalry-mechanized group? The famous German punctuality

made life much easier for future historians. The composition, deployment, technical condition of the German Air Force are scheduled literally by the day [24, 36, 38].

So, on the left (northern) flank of Army Group Center, in the strip from Vilnius to Grodno, the offensive of the 3rd Panzer Group and the 9th Wehrmacht Army was supported from the air by the 8th Luftwaffe Air Corps under the command of General V. Richthofen. Let's say right away - it was one of the best, most experienced and famous formations of the Luftwaffe. The air groups that were part of the 8th Corps fought from the first hours of the Second World War, going through the Polish and French campaigns, the "battle for Britain" and the battle for Crete. They were transferred to the Eastern Front from the battle zone over the Mediterranean Sea just a few days before the start of the invasion. This is true. More

precisely, one part of the truth. Another, which

Soviet "historians" have always forgotten, is that many months of continuous hostilities led to completely inevitable consequences in terms of the number

and technical condition of the aircraft.

In concrete terms, it looked like this. The bomber aviation of the 8th AK consisted of three air groups of "horizontal" bombers (I / KG2, III / KG2, III / KG3). With a regular strength of the Luftwaffe air group of 40 aircraft, by the morning of June 24, 1941, these three groups had 21, 23 and 18 aircraft, respectively, in good condition. Taking into account four command vehicles, the 8th Air Corps could lift 66 bombers into the air that day. Moreover, these were obsolete and already discontinued Dornier aircraft - Do-17Z.

The main strike force of the 8th Air Corps of the Luftwaffe was four groups of diving Ju-87s (II / StG1, III / StG1,

I / StG2, III / StG2). They were armed with 103 serviceable Junkers. There were

so many of them on the morning of June 22. Two days later, by the morning of June 24, four groups of dive bombers had, respectively, 28, 24, 19 and 20 combat-ready aircraft. In total, including staff vehicles, 96 aircraft [24, 36]. By the end of the day on June 24, there were even fewer of them left. At least 9 pieces from the StG1 were shot down that day by fighters of Zakharov's division (43rd IAD) over Minsk [63].

In general, the low-speed and weakly armored "lappet" often became easy prey for fighters (especially at the exit from a dive, when both the pilot and the air gunner were in a semi-conscious state). So, the commander of group III / StG1 Hauptmann G. Malke was shot down three times behind the front line in the location of the Soviet troops. Twice he himself got out, and the third time, on July 8, 1941, he was taken out from behind the front line by a special search group. Already on June 23, 1941, over the Kaunas-Vilnius highway, the commander of the group I / StG2 Hichholm was shot down in an air battle. Well, history simply did not save the names of dozens of ordinary pilots ...

In order for the reader to appreciate this "multiple numerical superiority of German aviation", we note that the Soviet bomber divisions that took part in the operation described by Polynin, as of June 1, 1941, had 453 bombers in good condition. And this is without the obsolete heavy TB-3. It is also worth noting that the maximum weight of the bomb load of the German Do-17Z was 1000 kg, our "obsolete" SB - 1600 kg, and the new DB-Zf - 2500 kg. The incredulous reader has already thought, probably, that the 8th AK Luftwaffe, which fell into the action zone of KMG Boldin (and, consequently, on the pages of our story), was the smallest and weakest. Not at all. The formation of dive bombers that were part of it was the largest on the entire Soviet-German front.

The 2nd Air Corps (southern flank of Army Group Center) had only three groups of dive bombers (94 serviceable Junkers on the morning of June 22, 88 by June 24, 1941) [24, 36].



And it's all. In the offensive zone of the army groups "North" and "South" (the Baltic states, Ukraine, Moldova) in the first days of the war there was not a single diving

Ju-87 at all. Not only that, the German aviation forces operating at the junction of the Western and Northwestern fronts of the Red Army were negligible in order to grind two Soviet mechanized corps in three days. It is not a fact that they were generally involved on a large scale in the fight against Boldin's mechanized cavalry group. They had other tasks ahead of them. The main

task of the dive bombers was fire support for the offensive of tank groups. This tactic proved to

be highly effective during the invasion of France, and it was on this interaction that all operational plans for the summer of 1941 were built. Moreover, such a tactic was the only possible one in a situation where two-thirds of the German tanks were armed with small-caliber guns (or had no artillery weapons at all). Without fire support from aviation, they simply would have nothing to break through the enemy's defensive lines. That is why those two aviation corps (2nd and 8th), which included Ju-87 dive bombers, acted exactly in the offensive zones of two "especially strong tank formations" (as they were called in the "Barbarossa" plan), t .e. Panzer groups Gotha and Guderian. But the command of the Luftwaffe could not fully concentrate on solving this main

task either, since in the first days of the war with the USSR it had one more, the first and most important task: suppression of the many times superior forces of Soviet aviation. Everything is relative. During the offensive in the West in May 1940, the Germans concentrated on a front of 300 km

(from Rotterdam to Saarbrücken) 27 fighter air groups, which included, according to various sources, about 1250-1350 Messerschmitts [57].

The Allied fighter forces opposing them (French, Dutch, Belgian aviation, ten squadrons of the British Air Force transferred to the north of France) numbered at most 700-750 aircraft [57]. In other words, on the side of the Luftwaffe there was almost a double numerical superiority,

complemented by the technical superiority of the Me-109 over most of the Allied fighters. In

such a situation, the Luftwaffe bomber forces (49 air groups, 1985 aircraft of all types, i.e. almost 7 aircraft per kilometer of the invasion front) could do their "direct business". However, even 7 bombers per kilometer is not enough. Pre-war Soviet science suggested that a density of 15–20 aircraft per kilometer of front should be created in the army's offensive zone [14]. On June 22, 1941, the Germans deployed 22 fighter air groups (66 squadrons) against the Soviet Union, which included a total of 1036 aircraft. They were opposed by the Soviet Air Force, which had 64 fighter regiments (320 squadrons) armed with about 4200 aircraft only as part of the aviation of the western districts [23]. Another 763 fighters were part of the fleet aviation. And this is just the tip of the iceberg! Behind the back of the advanced grouping of Soviet aviation were huge reserves of aircraft, air

units, and pilots. Suffice it to say that already on the fourth day of the war (June 25) the Air Force of the Western Front received two air divisions (that is, about 400-500 aircraft) transferred from the internal districts. By the seventeenth day of the war (July 9), the Air Force of the same Western Front received 452 more aircraft to make up for losses [53, p. 18]. You shouldn't be surprised by these numbers. The total number of fighters alone in the Red Army Air Force was (according to the most conservative source) 11,500 aircraft [35, p. 359]. If in such a situation the Germans had at least some chance of gaining air superiority, then it

consisted in concentrating all the forces of aviation - including bomber and assault - on the destruction of the ground infrastructure of the Soviet Air Force.

But just what kind of forces were they? On the front from the Baltic to the Black Sea (and this is more than one and a half thousand kilometers in a straight line), the Germans had 35 air groups, which were armed with a total (that is, taking into account faulty aircraft) 917 "horizontal" and 306 dive bombers. Less than one aircraft per kilometer of front!

And these frail forces also had to be split up, diverted from supporting the ground forces (from the fight against Boldin's KMG, in particular), switching them to suicidal — what they could become in the presence of organized resistance — raids on the airfields of Soviet fighter aircraft.

A typical example: in order No. 3, signed by G. Goth on the evening of June 23, regarding interaction with aviation, only the following is said: "... the 8th

air corps is redeploying temporary airfields forward to the Varen area and continues to carry out raids on aviation parts of the enemy" [VIZH, 1989, No. 7]. In short - do not rely on fire support from the air ...

No, the author is not at all going to accuse of direct deception those participants in the failed counterattack who write that German planes "chased literally after separate machines." Some of the sorties, which were able to perform in the first days of the war, one and a half hundred bombers of the 8th Luftwaffe Air Corps, were also directed against KMG Boldin. Some losses of equipment were caused precisely by these raids, some Luftwaffe pilots, insolent from impunity, were really chasing after some machines. And for people to whom the crackling Soviet propaganda promised that our aviation would be the fastest, highest and coolest of all, such a spectacle made an exceptionally depressing impression. The real "achievements" of the Luftwaffe were much more modest. At least, this is how those

commanders who did not need to look for excuses and "objective reasons" wrote about it in their reports. "Losses from aerial bombardments and machine-gun fire from the air, despite the low altitudes and the absolute dominance of

enemy aircraft, turned out to be very insignificant" [83]. This is a line from the report of the assistant chief of the operational department of the headquarters of the 2nd Rifle Corps, Captain Garan. This is the same corps (100th and 161st rifle divisions) that stopped German tanks at least for a few days on the northern approaches to Minsk.

Of course, other examples can be found. Of course, everyone is free to believe or not to believe in those myths that he chooses. They say,

faith brings relief. At the very least, the belief that the catastrophic defeat of the Red Army can be attributed to the actions of the frail forces of German aviation greatly simplified and now still simplifies the task of all falsifiers of the history of the Great War.

This chapter had already been completed when the author came across such an excerpt from an article about the history of the creation and combat use of the Ju 87:

"... on the fourth day of the war against the USSR, dive bombers from StG2 bombed a concentration of 60 Soviet tanks 80 km south of Grodno ..." Soviet tanks south of Grodno - this is exactly

our 6th mechanized corps, and the date corresponds exactly to the time of Boldin's failed counterattack by KMG. Let's continue reading:

"... later it turned out that only one was disabled tank..."

Stupidity or betrayal?

A military failure - and a terrible military catastrophe all the more - inevitably entails the search for spies and suspicions of treason. This version is not as crazy as it might seem at first glance. At least, the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army, General of the Army G.K. Zhukov, was very serious in those days. On August 19, 1941 (on the same day half a century before the putsch of the State Emergency Committee), he sent the following report to Stalin: "... I believe that the enemy knows very well our entire defense system, our entire operational-strategic grouping of our forces, and knows our immediate capabilities. Apparently, among our very big workers, who are in close contact with the general situation, the enemy has his own people..." [5, p. 361] For the sake of truth, it should be noted

and the fact that in all his post-war "memoirs and reflections" Georgy Konstantinovich never once recalls this memorandum of his.

As for the opinion of the author of this book, my soul does not lie to dark conspiracy theories.

It does not lie - and that's it. An inner voice suggests that any "enemy agency" is simply resting next to the results of that corruption

the people and the army, which for twenty years the Stalinist regime was unhindered. And

yet, stepping on the throat of his own song, the author considers it necessary to draw the reader's attention to the fact that even in a very short (in fact, two weeks) history of the military operations of the troops of the Western Special Military District, there are facts that do not fit into the broadest framework boundless sloppiness.

We will not argue about whether the command of the Western Front expected the imminent start of hostilities. Arguing about it is stupid and boring. Just by way of illustration, we will cite one more fact out of a thousand like it. "...

The conclusion that I made for myself could be formulated in four words - "from day to day" ... The commander of the Air Force of the district, General I. I. End listened to my report with the attention that testified to his long-standing and complete confidence in me. Therefore, we immediately went with him to report to the commander of the district ... "[55] This is how G.N. Zakharov the results of a reconnaissance flight, which he (major general, air division commander) personally carried out on one of the last pre-war days. What

does the command of the district (front) do in such a situation? Recalls the anti-aircraft artillery of the armies of the first echelon to the district assembly [78]. In particular, the anti-aircraft division of the 86th rifle division (10th army) was at the beginning of the war at a training ground 130 km from the location of the division, and the anti-aircraft divisions of the 6th mechanized corps and the entire 4th army were at the district

training ground near the village of Krupki, 120 kilometers east of Minsk [8]. This is all the more strange that in the neighboring, Kiev OVO, directly opposite orders were given. So, on June 20, Lieutenant General Muzychenko, commander of the 6th Army of the KOVO, ordered: "... the headquarters of corps, divisions, regiments to be in place. From the deployment area, do not go anywhere ... urgently recall the anti-aircraft divisions from the Lviv camp assembly to their formations, upon arrival, set the task of covering the location of the divisions from the air ...

"[61] Note that the experience of the German offensive in the West (in May 1940 d.) was carefully studied by the Soviet military leadership.

Information was scooped from two hands at once - both the German and the French (

standard" implies a massive air strike in the very first hours of the offensive, Pavlov knew very well. At least, a lot was said about this at that December (1940) meeting of the highest command staff, at which Pavlov was one of the main speakers.

Famous Soviet general and historian SP. Ivanov gives very An interesting explanation for such actions of our command:

"...Stalin sought by the very state and behavior of the troops of the border districts to make it clear to Hitler that peace reigns in our country, if not carelessness (and why did he strive for this ??? - M.S). Moreover, this was done ... as they say, in the most natural form. For example, anti-aircraft units were at the training camp ... As a result, instead of misleading the aggressor about the combat readiness of our troops by skillful disinformation actions, we actually reduced it to an extremely low degree" [45]. Further. At 4 pm on June 21, at a time

when the roar of thousands of engines of German troops advancing towards the Bug was already audible to the naked ear, the commander of the 10th SAD (deployed in the Brest-Kobrin area) received a new encryption from the district headquarters: an order on June 20 about bringing parts to full combat readiness and the prohibition of vacations cancel! Colonel Belov writes that he did not even begin to bring such an order to his subordinates, but why was such an order given! And, as can be judged from other recollections, in some parts this mysterious order was

done.

So, Lieutenant Colonel P. Tsupko writes in his memoirs that in the same 13th BAP (9th GARDEN, Bialystok-Volkovysk region), where "from dawn to dark, squadrons of camouflaged aircraft with suspended bombs and weapons, with crews stood ready ", finally declared a holiday:

"... on Sunday, June 22, a day off was announced in the 13th air regiment. Everyone was delighted: they didn't rest for three months ... On Saturday evening, leaving behind the senior chief of the operator of the headquarters captain Vlasov, the command of the air regiment, many pilots and technicians left for their families in Ros ... The entire air garrison remained in the care of the internal service, which was headed by the duty officer camp collection, junior lieutenant (!!! - M.S.) Usenko ... "[64]

Well, for a complete "set", in this regiment of the 9th SAD on the eve of the war, "an anti-aircraft battery was removed from its position and left for exercises." This whole tragic farce ended with the fact that the 13th BAP, equipped with the latest diving Ar-2 and Pe-2, was defeated on the very first day, and, as Tsupko writes, "almost all the pilots of our air regiment, exhausted, in dirty, torn uniforms, appeared in early July in Moscow ... "In the

memoirs of P.I. Tsupko meets another very strange episode. This episode is not only not confirmed, but directly contradicts all other sources known to the author. But since the glorious Politizdat twice (in 1982 and 1987) published Tsupko's book, it is not a sin for us to mention this story.

So, on the morning of June 22, the crew of the same junior lieutenant Usenko flew out for reconnaissance in the Grodno-Avgustov region. At the latest, after two or three hours (i.e. no later than noon), the Ar-2 returned to the base airfield of the 9th SAD near Bialystok. Usenko's plane had already landed when "soldiers in gray-green uniforms separated from the hangar and ran in an unfolded chain to the plane. On the other side of the hangar, Konstantin suddenly made out six three-engine transport Yu-52s, even further - up to a dozen Me-110s ... Gray-green figures scurried around the planes ... "In short,

the Germans were busily settling in an airfield located just a few miles from the headquarters 9th SAD, headquarters of the 10th Army of the Western Front, Bialystok regional department of the NKVD and others. In the middle of the day on June 22, all these respected organizations did not seem to have "relocated" anywhere yet. The German infantry occupied Bialystok only on June 24th.

Even more surprising evidence is found in memoirs of S.F. Dolgushin.

Lieutenant General of Aviation, Hero of the Soviet Union, Head of the Department of Tactics at the VVIA. Zhukovsky met the war as a junior lieutenant in the 122nd IAP (11th SAD). Sergei Fedorovich recalls: "... on the eve of the war, he served at an airfield located 17 km from the border. Every day we had to be on duty ... On Saturday, June 21, 1941, the commander of the district, General of the Army Pavlov, the commander of the Air Force of the district, General Konets, flew to us ... Makarov and I were sent for aerial reconnaissance. At a German airfield until this day

there were only 30 aircraft. We checked this repeatedly (!!! - M.S), but on that day it turned out that more than 200 German aircraft were deployed there ...

"Let's not be distracted by a discussion of sensational evidence that, it turns out, not only German, but also Soviet reconnaissance aircraft constantly invaded enemy airspace. Another thing is more important - what decision did the generals make when they received such a message about a sharp increase in the enemy grouping? "... at 18 o'clock an

order was received from the commander to remove weapons and ammunition from aircraft (aircraft of a fighter regiment based 17 km from the border. - M.S.). An order is an order - we removed the weapons. But boxes of ammunition left. On June 22, at 2:30 an alarm was announced (the time exactly coincides with many other testimonies. - M.S), and instead of taking off and covering the airfield, we urgently had to again put cannons and machine guns on planes. Our link was the first to set up cannons, and then 15 enemy aircraft appeared ... "[141, 142] What was it? Ridiculous coincidence?

The diabolical

game of Stalin, who tried to lull

Hitler to sleep before putting an ax in his back, and in the end outplayed himself? CONSPIRACY? As you know, in the spring of 1941, a grandiose case

"about

an anti-Soviet conspiracy in the leadership of the Red Army Air Force" began to unwind. The following were arrested: head of the Air Force of the Red Army P.V. Rychagov, head of the air defense department G.M. Stern, Assistant Chief of the General Staff for Aviation Ya.V. Smushkevich (twice Hero of the Soviet Union!), Chief of Staff of the Air Force P.S. Volodin, Air Force Commander of the Moscow Military District P.I. Pumpur, head of the Air Force Academy F.K. Arzhenukhin, Head of the Armaments Department of the Air Force I. Sakrier, Commander of the Air Force of the Far Eastern Front Gusev, Head of the GRU (formerly Commander of the DVA) I.I. Proskurov... Then came

the turn for the People's Commissar for Armaments B. Vannikov, Deputy. Head of the Main Artillery Directorate G. Savchenko,



Commander PribOVO Colonel-General A. Loktionov.

In the first days of the war, Deputy People's Commissar of Defense, General of the Army K.A. Meretskov and Commander of the Air Force of the Southwestern Front, Lieutenant

General E.S. Ptukhin. Much is unclear in the circumstances of the suicide of the Hero of the Soviet Union, the commander of the Air Force of the Western Front, Major General I. Kopets. The generally accepted version of the causes of suicide does not fit the most important thing in such a matter - the personality of the deceased.

Ivan Kopets, a 34-year-old aviation general, was not a "former fighter pilot." Until the last day he remained a flying pilot. Marshal Skripko, in his memoirs, even notes with some disapproval that the district aviation commander spent most of his time at airfields, to which Kopets did not arrive on the ZIS, but flew on the I-16 fighter. Yes, and the title of Hero of the Soviet Union squadron commander Kopets received for personal courage and skill shown in

the sky of Madrid. For a person with such a biography and such a character, it would be much more natural to commit suicide in the air, in the cockpit of a combat aircraft, taking several enemies with him. Everything falls into place, if only we assume that the reason for the suicide was not at all the shock from the unsuccessful (which no one knew about on the morning of the first day!) Start of hostilities. It's just that on June 22, 1941, they came for the front aviation commander. People with warm hearts arrived, "friends of the people." They arrived for Ptukhin on the 26th (although the decision to arrest him had already been made on June 20th), Meretskov was taken on the 23rd (according to some sources, on the Red Arrow train, according to others, right in the Kremlin), but the most dashing team. In this case, the only way to evade the "investigation" and the wrong court was only one bullet in the temple ...

Most likely, it was precisely with the "Meretskov case" - and not with the fact of the defeat of the Western Front - that the arrest of the commander of the Western Front, Army General D.G. Pavlova. On June 30, 1941, he was removed from the post of commander, summoned to Moscow, "scrubbed" as it should, but after that, all in the same rank of army general, he was sent to fight on the same Western Front. There is information that Pavlov was appointed deputy front commander for armored forces [45]. Not such a big drop in

positions - if we take into account that the people's commissar of defense himself, Marshal Tymoshenko, was appointed the new commander of the front. Pavlov was arrested on July 4, right on the road near the city of Dovsk (30-40 km from the front line, which then passed near Rogachev). From the protocols of interrogations, it clearly follows that "conspiratorial ties with Uborevich and Meretskoy" were of much more interest to the investigation than to clarify the real reasons for the defeat of the Western Front. At the trial, Pavlov renounced the self-incrimination knocked out of him and was sentenced to death only for "inaction of the authorities, incompetence and the collapse of command and control." But, judging by the pressure of the "investigators", it was a completely different matter - the case of a conspiracy of the highest command staff of the

Red Army. To understand the situation in the leadership of the army, this fact is also very remarkable. At the trial, refusing unfounded accusations, Pavlov at the same time admitted that he and Meretskoy in January 1940, on the Finnish front, had a conversation that "in the event of a German attack on the USSR and the victory of the German army, it is worse for us from it will not happen". Pavlov explained his behavior by the fact that this conversation took place "while drinking" [67, p. 98]. And what then was on the mind of the sober generals?

## **Brest Fortress**

Not everything is as clear as it seems in the history of the defense of the legendary Brest Fortress. In his secret (until 1988) monograph, Sandalov writes directly and without

equivocation: "... The Brest Fortress turned out to be a trap and played a fatal role at the beginning of the war for the troops of the 28th Rifle Corps and the entire 4th Army ... a large number The personnel of the units of the 6th and 42nd Rifle Divisions remained in the fortress, not because they had the task of defending the fortress, but because they could not get out of it ... "[79] Everything is absolutely logical. The fortress is built in such a way that it would be difficult to enter it. As a result, it is difficult to withdraw a large mass of people and equipment from any fortress at once. Sandalov writes that there was only one (northern) gate to exit the Brest Fortress in an easterly direction, then it was necessary

the river Mukhavets encircling the fortress. It is terrible to think what was going on there when two rifle divisions — almost 30 thousand people — tried to break out through this “eye of a needle” under a hail of enemy shells.

Just south of Brest, in a military town 3 km from the line of border posts, another division was stationed: the 22nd tank division from the 14th MK.

“This town,” writes Sandalov, “was on a flat area, well visible from the enemy’s side... the disposition of units was crowded... On alarm, the division went to the Zhabinka area and to the north (that is, back from the border! - M.S). In this case, the division had to cross the river. Mukhavets, cross the Warsaw highway and two railway lines ... This meant that during the passage of the division, all traffic along highways and railways was stopped in the Brest area ... ”Of course, the Germans appreciated and fully used the opportunities provided to them. In addition to the “own” artillery of the 45th infantry division of the Wehrmacht, artillery of two neighboring

(34th and 31st) infantry divisions, twelve separate batteries, and a division of heavy mortars were put forward to shell Brest. For greater “convenience in work” the Germans lifted into the air tethered balloons with spotters. A flurry of fire literally swept thousands of people off the face of the earth, destroyed vehicles and artillery, which stood in close rows in the open. The 98th separate anti-tank division, reconnaissance battalion and some other units of the 6th and 42nd rifle divisions were almost completely destroyed. The 22nd Panzer Division lost up to half of its tanks and vehicles, the division's artillery depot and fuel and lubricant depot blew up from enemy shells, and then exploded. It was after three divisions were shot, like a training target at a training ground, and the Germans occupied the burning ruins of Brest at 7 in the morning, that the “heroic epic of the defense of

the Brest Fortress”, sung in verse and prose, began. Now is the time to ask the age-old Russian question - who is to blame?

The fortress, as an inanimate object, could not play any role. This phrase in Sandalov's monograph is just a figure of speech. The role of the "trap" was played by decisions made by people. Who took them, when and, most importantly, why? Traditional Soviet historiography

habitually mows down like a psycho: "A rash deployment was allowed ..." What did one have to think about in order to place three divisions where there should be no one and nothing - except for border patrols and minefields - and should not be!

For the modern reader, the Suvorov version has already become familiar - Stalin was preparing for an invasion and therefore moved his troops right to the border line. But we will not rush to agree with this. Let's think with our heads and compare. The 4th Army hospital was

located ... on an island in the middle of the Bug, that is, not even near the border, but already abroad. Is this also so cleverly invented for delivering a "sudden first strike"?

And did Stalin really decide to conquer all of Europe with the forces of the 22nd Panzer Division alone? The meaning of the question is that all the other sixty tank and thirty-one motorized divisions of the Red Army were NOT deployed near the border. I hope the reader will forgive us for not disclosing the entire list, but even the mechanized corps of the first echelon before the war were based in Siauliai, Kaunas, Grodno, Volkovysk, Bialystok, Kobrin, Rivne, Brody, Lvov, Drohobych, Stanislav ... On distance from 50 to 100 km from the border. To fire at them from a cannon at dawn on June 22 was impossible in principle.

For my most respected (i.e., meticulous) readers, I'm ready to clarify that there was another division (41st TD from the 22nd MK), which on the eve of the war turned out to be very close, 12-15 kilometers, from the border (in the city of Vladimir-Volynsky). But even 12 km is not 3 km. The difference, from the point of view of the possibility of getting out from under artillery fire, is huge. In the early morning of June 22, the commander of the 41st TD opened the "red package", and the division moved along the highway to Kovel in a forced march. In the report on the combat operations of the division we read: "At 4 o'clock in the morning on 22.6.41, it was fired upon by long-range artillery fire of the enemy and during the period of mobilization had the loss of 10 fighters killed ..." [8]

The most important thing is that the divisions of light tanks (and the "Brest" 22nd TD was armed only with T-26) on the banks of the border

rivers do absolutely nothing. First, the artillery must suppress the enemy's fire system, then the infantry must establish crossings and seize a bridgehead on the enemy coast - and only after that, a tank horde should burst into the gap from the depth of the operational formation. This is exactly how the chief tanker of the Red Army, General Pavlov, reported to the High Meeting (in December 1940), which is why in the "red package" the concentration area for the 22nd TD was not the eastern bank of the Bug, but the village of Zhabinka, 25 km from Brest! What prevented the 22nd TD from being hidden in the forests even east of this very Zhabinka? Already something, but there are enough forests in Belarus. Who and why drove the tank division into the camp "on level ground, well visible from the enemy"? Who and why locked two rifle divisions in the "mousetrap" of an ancient fortress?

We will begin to collect answers to these questions - as was customary in ancient times - starting with the "lower ranks". EAT. Sinkovsky, on the eve of the war

- major, head

of the operational department of the headquarters of the 28th rifle corps of the 4th army:

"... the command of the 28th SC filed a petition with the command of the 4th army for permission to withdraw the 6th and 42nd divisions from the fortress. Permission was not forthcoming..." [44] F.I. Shlykov, on the eve of the war - a

member of the Military Council (simpler speaking - commissar) of the 4th army. You have the floor, comrade commissar:

"... we wrote to the district (i.e., to the command of the ZapOVO. - M.S.) to allow us to withdraw one division, some warehouses and a hospital from Brest. We were allowed to transfer only part of the hospital to another area..." [44] L.M. Sandalov, on the eve of the war - colonel, chief of staff 4-

th Army, in his monograph on the military operations of the army, writes:

"... it was urgently required to change the deployment of the 22nd Panzer Division, to which, however, the district did not give its consent ..." So, let's sum up the

intermediate results. Everyone is aware of the fallacy of placing three divisions directly on the line of border pillars. But - the command of the corps is forbidden to withdraw divisions from Brest by the command of the army, which, in turn, is forbidden to do this by the command of the district. Moreover, a tense struggle is going on around the issue of the withdrawal of troops from Brest: the corps is asking for permission to withdraw

from the fortress of all units, the army command asks the district headquarters for permission to withdraw at least one division ...

But what about the district

command? D.G. Pavlov, Army General, Commander of the Western Front (Special Military District), gave the following testimony in court:

"... back in early June, I ordered the withdrawal of troops (emphasized by me. - M.S.) from Brest to the camps. Korobkov did not fulfill my order, as a result of which three divisions were defeated by the enemy when leaving the city ... "A.A. Korobkov,

major general, commander of the 4th army, gave court the following testimony:

"... I do not plead guilty... I categorically deny Pavlov's testimony... No one gave the order to withdraw units from Brest. I personally have not seen such an order ... "

Finding himself shoulder to shoulder with Korobkov (they were sitting on the same dock), Pavlov immediately changes his testimony. The following dialogue takes place between the two doomed generals: "Defendant

Pavlov: "In June, on

my orders, the commander of the 28th Rifle Corps, Popov, was sent with the task of evacuating all troops from Brest to the camps by June 15.

Defendant Korobkov: I didn't know

about it. This means

that Popov must be prosecuted..." [67] Pay attention, dear reader, to what is the subject of

dispute and trial. The generals are not arguing about whether Pavlov's orders were correct, timely, effective ... They cannot agree with each other on whether the order was given to withdraw troops from Brest or not. How can this be a matter of controversy? Even in kindergarten, the boss's orders are issued in writing, recorded in a journal, put into a folder with ribbons. The order of the headquarters of the Western Special Military District was (or was not) issued three weeks before the start of the war. In absolutely peaceful time. Did the German saboteurs steal him from the safe? And why is the order of the district command given "over the head" of the army commander directly to the corps commander? That same 28th SC, whose command, according to Major

Sinkovsky, not just an order, but even "permission to withdraw two divisions from the Brest Fortress did not receive" ...

As soon as we started talking about Brest, then it's time to recall the history of the defense of what, according to the plans of the Soviet command, was to act as the "Brest fortress". Of course, we are not talking about the dungeons of an old and rather dilapidated castle, but about the Brest fortified area (UR No. 62).

The Volga flows into the Caspian Sea, horses chew oats, twice two makes four, the gullible and naive Stalin broke all the pillboxes on the old (1939) state border, but they did not manage to build anything worthwhile on the new one. Everyone knows this. This is stated in any book about the war. This is taught in school. Everyone united in defending this "truth": from Viktor Suvorov to any party "historian".

But the awl bursts uncontrollably out of the bag. In No. 4 for 1989, the Military Historical Journal, the press organ of the USSR Ministry of Defense, placed a table with numbers reflecting the state of the fortified areas on the new border by June 1, 1941. The editors generously allocated 5.5 x 2.5 for this table see magazine square. Information was typed in microscopic letters that 128 long-term firing structures were built in the Brest UR, and another 380 DOSs were under construction. The tiny area did not allow readers to be informed that the deadline for completion was July 1, 1941, and work was in full swing from dawn to dusk.

By the way, no one blew up anything on the old border either. On the contrary, on May 25, 1941, another government decree was issued on measures to reconstruct and re-equip the "old" URs. The completion date was set for October 1, 1941. Some pillboxes of the Minsk UR are intact to this day. The one and a half meter concrete withstood all the shelling, and when the Germans, already during the occupation of Belarus, tried to blow up pillboxes, they soon had to abandon this idea because of the huge consumption of explosives in short supply in the war ... Let us return,

however, to Brest. As Sandalov writes (at that time he was the chief of staff of the 4th army, in the strip of which the Brest UR was built), "all sapper units of the 4th army and the 33rd engineering regiment were involved in the construction of the Brest fortified area.

district ... In March-April 1941, an additional 10 thousand people of the local population were involved with 4 thousand carts ... since June, by order of the district, two battalions from each rifle regiment of the division were involved in defensive work ... " [79] On June 16, the construction rush was once again spurred on by the decree of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and the Council of People's Commissars

of the USSR "On accelerating the putting of fortified areas on alert" [3]. Thus, we will not be much mistaken if we assume that by June 22 most of the 380 unfinished DOSs of the Brest UR were already ready or almost ready. Nobody knows the exact numbers. So, summing up (according to the table in the VIZh) the number of built DOSs in four fortified areas of the Western Front gives the number 332, but on the next page, in the text of the article, it is said that "505 DOSs were built by June 1941." Pavlov and Klimovskikh give an even larger figure at the trial - 600... [67]

Be that as it may, but **on every kilometer** of the front of the Brest fortified area there were **three** concrete boxes dug into the ground, the walls of which could withstand a direct hit by a heavy field howitzer shell. One is fully built and equipped, and two more of the same boxes, partially unfinished. This is in addition to the river Buga created by nature itself, along which the border then passed. Even if we assume that not a single unit of special weapons was installed in any DOS, then in this case, simply by placing machine-gun platoons of rifle divisions in them, armed with standard "tar" and "maxims", it was possible to create a continuous zone of fire damage . There were machine guns. According to the state in April 1941, in the rifle division of the Red Army there were 392 light and 166 heavy machine guns. By state. In fact, by June 22, 1941, the Red Army was armed with 170,000 light machine guns and 76,000 heavy machine guns [35, p. 351]. However, all these improvisations were superfluous. As follows from the testimony of the

commander of the Western Front, Pavlov, a third of the DOSs were already armed. Moreover, it is by no means armed with dilapidated cannons, allegedly taken from the fortified areas on the old border. Comrade I.N. Shveikin met the war as a lieutenant

in the 8th machine gun and artillery battalion of the Brest UR. He testifies:



“... the quality and combat equipment of the pillboxes was much higher compared to the pillboxes on the old border. There were only four guns per battalion, and the rest of the weapons were machine guns. Here, many pillboxes (45% of the total. - MS) had one or more guns paired with machine guns ... The guns operated semi-automatically. Spent cartridges fell into special wells outside the pillboxes, which was very convenient. Combat structures were equipped with very good optics...” [44]

The reader, who was reliably prepared by the communist "historians", already understood everything: there were pillboxes, but only stupid Stalin did not allow them to be taken. In order not to "give a reason." The logic is amazing. Not to mention the fact that neither Stalin nor Hitler ever needed "reasons" (because at the right time they made them in any quantity themselves), compared to the very fact of building THOUSANDS of concrete boxes on the banks of the border river, occupying them in the dark night garrisons could not "provoke" anyone and anything. That is why they were occupied. Every

night. “... At the end of May, combat alerts became more frequent, during which we occupied our pillboxes ... We spent the night in the pillboxes, and in the morning, after lights out, we returned to our dugouts. In June, such alarms became almost daily. On the night of June 21 - too. On Saturday, June 21, as usual, we watched a movie after dinner. It was striking that, in contrast to previous Saturdays, there were no civilians from the nearby villages to be seen on the benches. After the film, the all-clear sounded, but we didn't have to sleep for a long time: at 2 o'clock in the morning we were alerted and in half an hour we were already in our pillboxes, where wagons

with ammunition soon arrived ... ”These are lines from the memoirs of L.V. Irina, who met the war as a cadet of the training company of the 9th artillery battalion of the Grodno UR [83]. There is no reason to doubt that the Brest UR lived in the spring of 1941 according to the same charters and instructions.

Everything is relative. The “Mannerheim Line”, which historians of the Second World War remembered a thousand and one times, had only 166 concrete pillboxes at a front of 135 km, and most of the pillboxes were machine guns, and only 8 so-called “millionaire pillboxes” were armed with cannons.

How was all this used? The Red Army gnawed through the Mannerheim Line with huge losses throughout February 1940. The Germans practically did not notice the existence of the Brest fortified area. In the report of the headquarters of Army Group Center (June 22, 1941, 20:30) we find only a brief statement: "The border fortifications were broken through in the sectors of all corps of the 4th Army" (i.e., just in the defense zone of the Brest UR ) [61]. And in Guderian's memoirs, we will not find a single mention of any battles during the breakthrough of the defense line of the Brest fortified area.

But. Some bunkers fought until the end of June 1941. The Germans had already occupied Bialystok and Minsk, reached Bobruisk, began crossing the Berezina, and at that time the 3rd company of the 17th battalion of the Brest UR held 4 bunkers on the banks of the Bug near the Polish town of Semyatyche up to 30 June! [44] The concrete floors withstood all the shelling, and only having the opportunity to surround the pillboxes and break through their walls with heavy land mines, the Germans were able to

suppress the resistance of a handful of heroes. And what did everyone else do? "Most of the personnel of the 17th battalion retreated in the direction of Vysokoe, where the headquarters of the 62nd fortified area was located ... A group of personnel of the 18th bulbat from the Brest region retreated in the same direction ..." [79] So, calmly and melancholy, Sandalov describes the fact of mass desertion that took

place in the first hours of the war. Happens. In war as in war. In any army in the world confusion, and panic, and flight.

That is why there are commanders in the army, in order to cheer up some in such a situation, to shoot others, but to achieve the fulfillment of a combat mission. What did the commander of the 62nd UR do when crowds of Red Army soldiers who abandoned their firing positions ran to his headquarters in Vysokoe?

"The commander of the Brest fortified area, Major General Puzyrev, with part of the units that had retreated to him in Vysokoe, on the very first day withdrew to Belsk (40 km from the border. - M.S), and then further to the east ..." [79] How is it "departed"? The air regiments, as we are told, "relocated" to the deep rear in order to receive new aircraft there. Instead of those previously abandoned at airfields. Let's say.

But what was Comrade Puzyrev going to get in the rear? A new mobile pillbox on wheels?

Perhaps these questions were asked to him by someone. The answers are still

unknown. "Born 1890 Commandant of the 62nd fortified area. Died November 18, 1941. There is no data on the place of burial" - that's all that the Military History Journal told its readers. How, where, under what circumstances General Puzyrev died, why in the autumn of 1941 he continued to be listed as the "commandant" of the non-existent fortified area - all this is covered with a dense darkness of state secrets.

Senior Chief of General Puzyrev, Assistant Commander of the Western Front for Fortified Areas, Major General I.P. Mikhailin, died from a stray shrapnel in the early morning of June 23, 1941.

Boldin's memoirs also reveal some details this accident:

"...retreating with the troops, Major General Mikhailin accidentally found out where I was and came to my command post..." General Mikhailin did not retreat "together with the troops." He clearly

overtook them. Boldin's command post, as the attentive reader will remember, was located 15 km northeast of Bialystok, i.e. more than 100 km from the border. A soldier does not stomp so much with his feet in a day ...

## **lady with ficus**

The documentary detective genre requires bringing together all the storylines and a clear indication of the main villains. Alas, nothing but a lot of question marks, the author is not able to offer readers. Alas, the elucidation of the true causes of the greatest and unparalleled tragedy in the history of Russia has not become the subject of an authoritative judicial or, at least, parliamentary investigation over the past sixty years. This situation, which is completely unthinkable in any civilized state, has become familiar to our society and has not caused any protest or even surprise for a long time. The source base at our disposal does not allow us to move

beyond unverified hypotheses and leading questions. One of these questions arose while reading the following

excerpt from Boldin's memoirs. So, the first day of the war. At noon, Boldin flies from Minsk to a military airfield 35 km east of Bialystok. "... Every

minute counts. We must hurry to the 10th army. There is no passenger car at the airport. I take a lorry, get into the cab and instruct the driver to go to Bialystok... ...our lorry

rushes along a busy highway. But this is no ordinary revival. What we see on it looks more like a hustle and bustle of completely bewildered people who do not know where and why they are going or driving... ...several

cars appeared. Ahead of the "ZIS-101". Wide ficus leaves protrude from its open windows. It turned out that this was the car of some regional chief. There are two women and two boys in it. "Do you really have

nothing else to carry at a time like this but flowers?" It would be better if they took old people or children, I appeal to women. Heads down, they are silent. The driver turned away, and it was clear that he felt ashamed. Our cars parted... ...an emka

appeared on the highway. In it is an engineer of one of the construction sites of the fortified area. I suggest that the engineer put my lorry in order, and I myself take his car and continue on my way to the 10th Army. We need to get there as quickly as possible. Eighteen hours. The bright sun

illuminates the road..." 180] Reread this passage, dear reader. Two, three times. He's worth it. Before us is the key to unraveling what is commonly called

the "mystery of 1941." First of all, let's define the circumstances of time and

place of action. The meeting with the lady and the ficus takes place east of Bialystok, i.e. 100 km from the border, in the afternoon of June 22, 1941, i.e. about 12 hours after the start of hostilities, 4-5 hours after Molotov's speech on the all-Union radio. The war has begun, and everyone already

knows it. One of the many consequences of this tragic fact is that all cars, without exception, are now subject to mobilization and transfer to the military authorities. District commander, and in his absence - first deputy

Comrade Boldin, commander of the Western Special Military District, is now the highest authority for all military and civilians on the territory of Belarus.

Boldin is not in a hurry to go fishing. He must urgently arrive at the headquarters of the 10th Army, create and direct the actions of the main shock group of the front. The lives of hundreds of thousands of people depend, without any exaggeration, on how quickly and in what physical condition it arrives at its

destination. Conclusion - Boldin not only had the right, but simply had to transfer from the plywood booth of a rattling, very unreliable "lorry" to the leather chair of a comfortable high-speed limousine. He - Boldin - is already at war, his time and his well-being have already ceased to be his personal matter, in which one can show personal modesty .. Does

Boldin himself understand this? Undoubtedly. He repeats phrases several times that "you need to hurry", and immediately takes the first oncoming "emka" for himself.

And the powerful and reliable "government" ZIS-101 lets go, limiting itself to only a caustic remark. From which (remarks) the driver alone became ashamed - but not the passengers of the ZIS. Silence was their answer. After that, "our cars parted." In principle, this information is already

enough to determine which "regional chief" owned both this car and this ficus, and why the "ZIS" was not driving alone, but first in the "group of cars".

Bialystok at that time was a provincial town with a population of 150 thousand people and several textile factories. In Poland, it was an abandoned eastern outskirts; as part of the USSR, it became a distant western borderland. "Some bosses" in such cities traveled by tram, big (by local standards) bosses - by "emkas". There has always been a lot of tension with cars in the USSR. The representative "ZIS-101" in Bialystok could only be at the disposal of three people:

the first secretary of the regional committee of the Party of Lovers of Common Property and the heads of the regional departments of the NKVD and the NKGB. The fourth, as they say, is not given. And only hammered into

Fear of the "organs" can be explained by the fact that the lieutenant general, behind whom there were already two "liberation campaigns" - to Poland and Romania - did not dare to shake the ficus to the sidelines. Having

thus determined the ownership of the machine and women, let us now turn our attention to the ficus pot.

Liberation campaigns have always been accompanied by a sharp jump in the well-being of the military, party and, above all, the KGB bosses. After the victory was won with the blood of tens of millions, this phenomenon blossomed into a magnificent double flower. They were dragged by cars, wagons, echelons. They dismantled and transported Goering's luxurious villa to the Moscow region, melted down the golden crown of Hohenzollerns on the head of a cane, and especially for Marshal Zhukov, they searched all over the destroyed Berlin for some unprecedented "dogs of an English breed

with beards" ... During a search of the arrested person on January 24, 1948. .F. Telegin, lieutenant general, member of the Military Council of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany, or, more simply, the closest associate of G.K. Zhukov, was confiscated:

"over 16 kg of silverware, 218 cuts of woolen and silk fabrics, 21 hunting rifles, many antiques made of porcelain and earthenware, furs, tapestries made by French and Flemish masters of the 17th and 18th centuries and other expensive things ..." (VIZh, 1989, No. 6) In 1939, these

"flowers" were just blooming, but already during the liberation campaign in Poland in the zone of Soviet occupation near Lvov, the property of the wife of the American ambassador to Poland Biddle (a lady from a very wealthy family) disappeared, including a huge collection of antiques. For almost two years, the Americans pestered the Soviet Foreign Ministry with a request to look into this issue. They were very surprised how 200 (two hundred) boxes with paintings, furs, carpets, silverware, etc. could disappear without a trace in a country with "abolished" private property. In the end, the patience of our diplomats snapped, and on June 5, 1941, Comrade Lozovsky, Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, told US Ambassador Steingardt the following verbatim:

"... a revolution was taking place in Western Ukraine and Western Belarus at that time. Mr. Ambassador obviously thinks that when people make a revolution, they only think about how to save someone's property. The Soviet government is not the guardian of Mr. Biddle's property..." [69, p. 724] Having poured

out his soul in this way, the Soviet authorities returned 47 boxes and promised to return the rest "if anything else is found."

This whole long story is told to the fact that the stupid ficus was hardly the only valuable item in the house of the chief Bialystok boss. In the autumn of 1939, there was also a "revolution taking place", and in the family castles of the Radziwills, pretty little things also disappeared. The fact that the "first

lady of Bialystok" dragged a ficus with her suggests that the gathering took place in extreme haste, in a terrible panic, in a state close to insanity. And why? What, in fact, so

scared the lady with the ficus and her husband? The answer to this question is not as simple as it might seem at first glance. We know this today, the beginning of which was the shots on the border in the early morning of June 22, 1941. But who could know this on the evening of the first day?

From all the loudspeakers rumbled: "And if a hardened enemy comes to us, he will be beaten everywhere and everywhere." In Moscow, Directive No. 3 was being prepared for sending to the troops, according to which, by June 24, hostilities were to be transferred to enemy territory.

And what doubts could there be in the reality of these plans - based on the actual balance of forces of the parties? Even if there could be doubts, then where did such an unreasoning confidence come from that one must run wherever one's eyes

look? Did the lady's husband, by virtue of his official position, know the true state of affairs? But in this case, there was even less reason to panic. In the defense zone of the 10th Army, on a front of 200 km, ten Wehrmacht infantry divisions were advancing. With horse-drawn artillery, without a single tank. According to our regulations, three times as many forces were required for an

offensive on such a front. By the time a pot of ficus was thrust into the interior of an expensive car, the forward detachments of the Wehrmacht were still

finished crossing the border Bug. Even if we assume that the Big Chief did not believe in the ability of the Red Army to offer at least some resistance, then in this case there were no reasonable grounds for haste. From the border to Bialystok 75-100 kilometers. There are two rivers on the way: if you move from the south-west, then the Narew, if from the north, then the Biebrza. Even if it's not God knows what rivers, not the Dnieper and not the Vistula, but without a bridge across them, an infantry division with all its diverse economy cannot be transported. And the bridge still needs to be built, and how much time will it take just for the Wehrmacht division to pass through it, i.e. 15,000 men and 5,000 horses?

So before Thursday-Friday, the Germans in Bialystok could not be expected. There is plenty of time to collect. There was no need to rush about and grab in horror the first ficus that came to hand.

So what kind of force, just a few hours after Molotov read on the radio the words written for him by Stalin: "The enemy will be defeated, victory will be ours," filled all the roads with crowds of "completely bewildered people who do not know where and why they are going or are they going? While the author was writing and rewriting further

chapters of this sad story, the Olma-Press publishing house in 2002 published a book called "15 meetings with KGB General Belchenko" [62]. This valiant security officer, who led the suppression of popular uprisings in Central Asia, Budapest

and Tbilisi, on the eve of the war, worked as the head of the Bialystok NKGB Directorate. On page 129, the general assures that he sent his wife to Minsk on a "lorry". If this is true, then the ficus was from the house of the first secretary of the regional committee Kudryaev or the head of the NKVD Directorate Fukin. Be that as it may, Belchenko's memories complete the picture.

events of June 1941 with extremely colorful strokes.

"... At about 6 o'clock in the morning the bureau of the Bialystok Regional Committee of the Party gathered ... the bureau of the regional committee proposed the creation of combat Chekist groups to blow up and destroy defense facilities, military bases and warehouses at the

moment the enemy entered the city ..." No subjunctive mood. At the third HOUR of the war, the Belostok comrades no longer doubted that the enemy would enter into



city. Even faster than it will be possible to take out the contents of military

warehouses. And finally, a little

about the ficus: "... on the first day of the war, I sent my family on a lorry towards Minsk. The families of my deputies rode with her... The gathering took place in turmoil. As always (?) happens in such cases, the most important thing was forgotten. So, my wife did not take a single document proving her identity ... "

**The detail is interesting.** Did she forget to take it - or did the husband carefully check that there were no identity documents with his wife?

That's exactly how it "always happens" when a Chekist (or his wife) sent to the enemy rear.

Or at a meeting with the working people of the Land of Soviets, who (for the first time in many years) have the opportunity to express their love for the glorious Chekists by action ...

## Part 3

# SEVEN DO NOT BEAT ONE

**“I love our plans in abundance ...”**

The places are amazing. The most picturesque forests are the age-old oak, beech, plane tree. Clean rivers, in which fish are caught in abundance to this day; fertile land. And what kind of music of ancient Slavic antiquity sound the names of cities and rivers of this land: Goryn, Ubort, Radomyshl, Turya, Kremenets, Slavuta, Korosten, Yavorov ...

True, the history of Galicia and Volhynia is very far from the blissful song of universal love. The fire of insane enmity - religious, national, class - more than once or twice devastated this rich land. Here, near Zbarazh and Berestechko, the Cossacks of Bogdan Khmelnytsky fought furiously with the Polish gentry, here the fighters of the First Cavalry, sung by Babel, competed in cruelty with their opponent, it was here, near the walls of the city of Dubno, that Taras Bulba delivered a short and terrible sentence to his own son. It was in these places richly

watered with tears and blood, in the Radekhiv-Dubno-Brody triangle, that one of the main battles of the Second World War, the largest tank battle of the 20th century, unfolded at the end of June 1941. The battle, known (and it would be more correct to say - almost unknown to anyone) under the name "counterattack of the mechanized corps of the South-Western Front." Before starting an investigation into

the circumstances of this “third Stalinist strike”, a small technical remark. After Eastern Poland was forcibly turned into the western outskirts of the Soviet Union in 1939, along with the expulsion of half a million Poles, there was also a massive “expulsion” of Polish-sounding names from the geographical map. Stanisławów turned into Ivano-Frankivsk, Zholkev turned into Nesterov, Radzivilov into Chervonoarmeysk, Krystynopol into Chervonograd, and so on. Therefore, to make life easier for the most attentive readers who want to check this text with a map, all toponyms,

found in the documents of 1941 will be brought into line with modern names. As in the tragic

story with the defeat of the cavalry-mechanized group of the Western Front near Grodno, in Ukraine everything also began **with Directive No.**

Defense Timoshenko ordered:

"... with powerful concentric strikes by mechanized corps, all aviation of the Southwestern Front and other troops of the 5th and 6th armies, encircle and destroy the enemy grouping advancing in the direction of Vladimir-Volynsky - Brody. By the end of June 24, capture the Lublin region. The rest of the

forces of the South-Western and Southern Fronts (26th, 12th, 18th, 9th armies) were assigned purely defensive tasks: "... firmly secure themselves and prevent the enemy from invading our territory..." [5] Full

text of this directive was published by the Military Historical Journal only 48 years after its signing [VIZH, 1989, No. 6], but in a summary it has been known for a long time. At the same time, every Soviet historian considered it his duty (or, more precisely, had a party task) to scold our main commanders for the fact that, "based on an unreasonable reassessment of the capabilities of the troops, they gave an order that was clearly unrealistic, and therefore impossible."

Later, after the awl finally got out of the bag, and from declassified documents it became clear that the capabilities of the Red Army (composition, strength, armament, reserves, ammunition and fuel supply) made it possible to set tasks to capture not only Lublin (just something 80 km west of the border), the focus of criticism has changed. Now it is customary to scold Directive No. 3 for the fact that it indicated completely unrealistic **timing** for the counterattack.

So, one comrade, a staff officer with a long record of work in operational departments, wrote a whole article about the fact that it takes at least a month to develop and prepare for an operation of this magnitude, and even better - two.

Let's not argue. We will respect the opinion of a professional. two so

two. But who said that the planning of the offensive operation and the operational deployment of troops in Western Ukraine began only in the late evening of June 22, 1941?

The latest pre-war plans for the Southwestern Front (Kyiv Special Military District) have not been declassified to this day. There is no longer the state that included the territory of the Kiev District, all the illegal agents, without exception, who provided intelligence information for the development of these plans, have died in the base, all the military equipment mentioned in these plans has long since gone to be melted down, has changed many times over the past six decades, the capacity of the road network mentioned in these plans ... In a

word, all reasonable reasons for classifying these yellowed pages. But

no - the close-knit ranks of veterans of party history science unanimously cover the "defector and traitor" Rezun-Suvorov, and the secret of the Big Plan is cherished like a needle with the life of Kashchei the Immortal, which, as you know, is in an egg, and an egg is in a hollow, and a hollow - across the

sea, and so on ... But the awl uncontrollably breaks out of the bag. At the end of 1991, at the moment of slight confusion that gripped the KP-GB at the sight of the "bronze Felix" floating on a steel cable over an angry crowd of thousands, one curious document escaped from the "archival GULAG": "Considerations on the plan for the strategic deployment of the forces of the Soviet Union in case of war with Germany and its allies" [VIZH, 1992, No. 1, 2].

The document was written in a single copy, by hand, by the Deputy Chief of the Operations Department of the General Staff of the Red Army, Major General (future Marshal and Chief of the General Staff) Vasilevsky. The text is edited by the hand of Vatutin or Zhukov. The date of writing is not indicated, only the month is in the "cap" - May 1941. There are no signatures of Timoshenko and Zhukov, there is no Stalin's resolution on the document.

Let's not digress into discussing the course of the discussion that arose after the publication of this, without exaggeration, a sensational document. Moreover, the main attention of the public

was drawn not to actual operational considerations, but to a completely ordinary (if only common sense, and not propaganda clichés are used) phrase: “I consider it necessary in no case to give the

initiative to the German command, preempt the enemy and attack the German army at that moment, when it will be in the deployment stage. The idea is quite obvious and by no means new to the Soviet military leadership. So, back in April

1939, K.A. Meretskov (at that time the commander of the troops of the Leningrad Military District), speaking at the analysis of the command-staff game held by the District Military Council,

stated:

“... at the moment when our opponents mobilize their armies, bring their troops to our borders, we will not sit and wait. Our operational training, the training of troops, must be directed in such a way as to ensure in practice the complete defeat of the enemy already at a time when he has not yet had time to gather all his forces... is able to listen to them that the May "Considerations" is a rough draft drawn up (on

15 sheets, with four appendices and seven maps) by General Vasilevsky, there is nothing to do in his spare time from his main work. We will not waste time on a “discussion” of this level, but simply compare the text of the handwritten “Considerations” with another document signed and drawn up “in all its form” (for ease of perception, the author highlighted some key words). So, the May (1941) “Considerations on the Strategic Deployment Plan”: “... The first strategic goal of the actions of the Red Army troops is to defeat the main forces of the German army deployed south of the Brest-Demblin line and reach the front by the

30th day of the operation Ostrołęka, Narew river, Lovich, Lodz, Oppeln, Olomouc...

The immediate task is to defeat the German army east of the Vistula River and in the Krakow direction, reach the Vistula River and capture the Katowice region. Why: deliver the main blow by the forces of the Southwestern Front in the direction of Krakow, Katowice ...

... deliver an auxiliary blow by the left wing of the Western Front ... with the aim of pinning down the Warsaw grouping and assisting the Southwestern Front in defeating the enemy's Lublin grouping ...

... The composition and tasks of the fronts deployed in the West: ... Southwestern Front - with a concentric attack by the armies of the right wing of the front, encircle and destroy the main enemy grouping east of the river. the Vistula in the Lublin region; at the same time, with a blow from the front of Seniava, Przemyśl, Lutów, defeat the enemy forces in the Krakow and Sandomierz-Kielce directions and capture the area of Krakow, Katowice, Kielce ... "

And here is another (very voluminous, detailed) secret document: "Note of the Chief of Staff of the Kiev

OBO on the decision of the Military Council of the South-Western Front on the deployment plan for 1940" [16, document No. 224, p. 484 - 498].

First, let's appreciate the amazing name. The 1940 document already uses the term "Southwestern Front"! Well, now let's turn to the content: "... Tasks of the Southwestern Front: The

immediate strategic task is to defeat, in cooperation with the left wing of the Western Front, the German armed forces in the areas of Lublin, Kielce, Radom, Krakow and exit on the 30th day operations on the front Pilica, Petrokov, Oppeln, Neustadt...

The immediate task is to encircle and destroy the enemy east of the river in cooperation with the 4th Army of the Western Front. Vistula and on the 10th day of the operation reach the river. Vistula and develop the offensive in the direction of Kielce - Krakow.

On the right, the Western Front (Baranovichi headquarters) has the task of attacking the left-flank 4th Army in the direction of Drogichin - Sedlec - Demblin to assist the Southwestern Front in defeating the enemy's Lublin grouping ... "Anyone who is not too lazy to

find all the above-mentioned cities on the map of Poland, can make sure that the tasks defined in these documents fully coincide in terms of goals, deadlines and milestones. Moreover, there are obvious textual similarities. Apparently, both of these documents were developed in

close interaction and on the basis of certain unified initial directives. Thus, the

attack on Lublin was planned at least six months before the fateful day of June 22, 1941. Moreover, in the document of December 1940, it was planned to deploy a special "horse mechanized army" in the area of Lvov - Yavorov - Nesterov, which was supposed to, advancing in a northerly direction, together with the 5th Army, take Lublin "by the end of the third day of the operation."

And here we see a coincidence both in form and content with the tasks set on the evening of June 22 by Directive No. 3.

Moreover (and this is very important to note), Directive No. 3 was a very cautious, moderate and restrained document in comparison with the pre-war plans of the Southwestern Front. Thus, according to the December plan, the attack on Lublin was **only one** of the blows inflicted by the troops of the Southwestern Front. Moreover, out of a total of 11 tank divisions and 13 tank brigades of the front, it was then planned to involve only 6 divisions and 3 brigades in the offensive against Lublin. Other armies of the Southwestern Front in December 1940 were assigned no less important tasks. On the 10th - 12th day of

the offensive, the troops of the 6th, 26th, 12th armies were to reach the line of the Vistula and Dunajec rivers (advance depth 120-130 km) and capture the crossings across these rivers at Sandomierz and Tarnow.

"So what? - the incredulous reader will object to us. "All this proves nothing." And he will be absolutely right. In any headquarters, even more so - in the General Staff of the huge, heavily armed Soviet Union, a lot of all sorts of different plans are being developed. Most of which are then destroyed in the prescribed manner, signed by a representative of the Special Department. So, perhaps, Comrade Stalin rejected the above-mentioned plans of the military command as contradicting the "invariably peaceful foreign policy of the USSR" and ordered to dig trenches and strengthen the defense? No. This is an

erroneous assumption that does not correspond to historical truth. The plans for a large-scale offensive by the Red Army from the territory of the "Lviv ledge" to southern Poland were approved and accepted for execution. Which is confirmed not by papers (which can be faked), not by memoirs (which are sometimes written

unscrupulous people "to order"), but by the ACTUAL DEPLOYMENT of troops, carried out in the spring and summer of 1941.

### **"Your last hour is coming, bourgeois..."**

In accordance with pre-war plans, it was planned to deploy four fronts on the western borders of the USSR: Northern, North Western, Western and South Western. The boundaries between the first three fronts were simply lines drawn in colored pencil on a top secret map hidden in a highly guarded safe. But the Southwestern Front (South-3. f.) had completely tangible, natural boundaries.

Northern flank Yu-3. f. was impenetrably closed by a strip of Pripjat swamps, which stretches strictly from west to east, from Brest to Mozyr 400 km deep into the territory of the USSR. Polissya is a swampy forest, cut up by hundreds of small rivers, absolutely impassable for the military equipment of that era. They say that there were villages in which not a single German soldier was seen during the three years of

occupation. The southern flank of the front rested on the Danube Delta (an equally impassable network of large and small channels) and the Black Sea coast. Thus, the territory Yu-3. f. It was actually an isolated theater of military operations that did not have operational communication with its neighbors (hereinafter we will call it the "southern theater of operations").

According to the plan of December 1940, the following seven armies were to be deployed in this theater (from north to south): 5A, 19A, 6A, 26A, 12A, 18A, 9A, having 76 rifle and 7 cavalry divisions. In the May (41st year)

"Considerations on the Strategic Deployment Plan" on Yu-3. front it was planned to deploy eight armies (not named by numbers), numbering 74 rifle and 5 cavalry divisions. In fact, at the end of June 1941, eight armies were deployed in the southern theater of operations. Six armies in the first echelon near the border (from north to south): 5A, 6A, 26A, 12A, 18A, 9A. In the deep operational rear of the front, two more armies were unloaded: 16A in the Shepetovka region and 19A in the Cherkasy region - Belaya Tserkov. In general



difficulties in the southern theater of operations, 62 rifle divisions were deployed (32 as part of the Yu-3. f., 13 as part of the Southern Front, 16 as part of 19A and 16A) and 5 cavalry divisions.

The conclusion is simple - the similarity of the "plan" and "fact" does not cause even the slightest doubt.

Let us now pass on to an estimate of the strength of the Red Army's main strike force—tank and motorized divisions. According to the

December plan as part of Yu-3. f. deployed 11 tank divisions and 13 tank brigades, 5 motorized divisions and 6 motorized brigades. A direct and unambiguous comparison of the December (1940) and May (1941) plans in this part is impossible - in February 1941, the structure of the tank forces was radically changed, the brigades were disbanded, and almost all divisions became part of 29 mechanized corps. But one thing is certain - the grouping of mechanized troops in the southern theater of operations has grown significantly (in comparison with the December plan) and should now include 28 tank and 15 motorized divisions (out of a total of 40 tank and 20 motorized divisions stationed in the European part of the USSR). Thus, the southern direction (to Krakow - Katowice) clearly became in May 1941 the direction of the main attack. In fact, by the start of hostilities, thirteen mechanized corps were deployed in the southern theater of operations. Here are their numbers: 22, 4, 15, 8, 16, 18, 2 in the first

echelon of the armies, 9, 19, 24 in the Yu-3 command reserve. f. and 5, 25, 26 in 16A and 19A. This gigantic grouping consisted of 26 tank and 13 motorized divisions, in addition, along with 16A, the 57th separate tank division also arrived (from Mongolia) in the Shepetovka-

Slavuta region. Total: 27 tank and 13 motorized divisions. What a pity that all this information was not reported to Hitler then! Maybe he would have shot himself four years earlier ... Let's sum up the first results. The actual grouping of Red Army troops in the southern theater of operations was very close to that outlined in pre-war plans.

This is the first.

Second. Such a deployment of troops - with a clearly expressed concentration of forces in one direction - could not have taken place in a random way, "by itself." Surely there was a plan

according to which a multi-million army was deployed. This plan, if not in all details, but in the main and basically coincided with those rough sketches that miraculously survived in the archives and, as a result of an even more incredible miracle, were declassified. But. Even if none of these documents had been published,

it would not be difficult to identify the main features of the Grand Plan. It is enough to "arrange" the mechanized corps of the Red Army on the geographical map of the southern theater of operations and indicate their staffing. And everything will immediately appear, as in a bath with a developer.

So, in the first echelon of the armies deployed (from north to south, from Kovel to Tiraspol) the following mechanized corps:

Номер мехкорпуса	Количество танков	В том числе Т-34 и КВ
22-й МК	712	31
15-й МК	749	136
4-й МК	979	414
8-й МК	899	171
16-й МК	478	76
18-й МК	282	0
2-й МК	527	60

From this table, it becomes quite obvious that there is a powerful strike force of three mechanized corps, the axis of which is the 4th МК - this mechanized corps is equipped with tanks for almost 100% of the regular strength, and in terms of the number of newest heavy and medium tanks it is equal to all other mechanized corps combined (in service with located in the operational depth of the 9th МК, 19th МК, 24th МК there were only a few new tanks each). In parentheses, we note that all figures

relating to the pre-war number of tank formations of the Red Army should be considered only as indicative. There was little order in their accounting. The above table was compiled according to a solid monograph [3], but in the memoirs of the former commander of the 8th МК, General Ryabyshev, the figure is 932 tanks, according to the Kiev Museum of the Great

During the Patriotic War, the 8th MK had 813 tanks, in the famous, very first open publication of the number of Soviet mechanized corps [VIZH, 1989, No. 4] the figure was 858. The situation

is the same for other corps. Now let's

see - where was the shock 4th MK located on the morning of June 22, 1941? In the

area of Lviv - Nesterov. That is, exactly where, according to the "December plan", the shock "cavalry mechanized army" was to be deployed, intended for an attack on Lublin! 60 km south-west of Lvov, in the area of Drohobych-Sambor, we find the 8th MK, and 100 km north-east of Lvov, in the area of Brody-Kremenets, the 15th MK was deployed.

From this initial area, a tank wedge could equally well fall on Tarnow, Sandomierz and Lublin. The distance from the line Drohobych - Lvov - Brody to these three Polish cities is almost the same: 175-200 km. According to the conditions of the terrain, the Lublin direction is most preferable - there will not be a single large river in the path of the advancing tank avalanche, the offensive route runs practically in the "corridor" between the Veps and San rivers. So what kind of "haste" and "unrealism" of

Directive No. 3 have our propagandists been talking about for so many years? For the attack on Lublin, only one thing was missing - an order. Here it is (the order) and was given

on the evening of June 22, 1941. Giving orders is easy. But did the high command of the Red Army take care to create the necessary "scientifically" threefold superiority of forces on the attacking side? No. There was no triple superiority.

The ratio of forces of the parties was expressed in other figures. You can count in different ways. You

can compare the total number of tank troops deployed by the Wehrmacht and the Red Army **throughout the southern theater of operations**. This is a reasonable enough approach. Distances in Western Ukraine are not "Siberian", but already "European". From deployment areas, even the most distant from the border, 16th MK, 18th MK, 9th MK, 19th MK (i.e. from the cities of Chernivtsi, Mogilev Podolsky, Novograd-Volynsky, Berdichev) to Lvov in total 250-300 km.

Even when driving through an open field at a snail's speed of 15 km / h, such a redeployment could be carried out using only 20 engine hours. This is two or three days of measured march. In fact, on dry June roads, with daylight hours of 18 hours, everything could be done faster. Finally, there are railroads. Lvov, the historical center of Galicia, is approached by five railways, through which it was possible to transport mechanized corps from almost anywhere in Ukraine and thereby save the precious engine life of tanks.

In this case, against **728** tanks in the 1st tank group of the Wehrmacht and **60** tanks in the only tank brigade of the Romanian army, the Soviet command could put up **5617** tanks. This is a SEVEN-

FOLD numerical superiority. And this figure is very low. We did not take into account the light tanks that were part of the rifle and cavalry divisions of the Red Army (there were no tanks at all in the infantry divisions of the Wehrmacht). We did not take into account more than one thousand cannon armored vehicles armed (like all Soviet light tanks) with a 45-mm 20K cannon, capable of penetrating the side armor of any German tanks at a kilometer range. Finally, we did not take into account almost two thousand tanks in the 16th and 19th armies, which were initially deployed in the Right-Bank Ukraine, in the rear of the Southwestern Front. It can be considered differently - closer to the harsh historical

reality. In fact, only six mechanized corps took part in the hostilities of the first week of the war in Western Ukraine: 22nd MK, 15th MK, 4th MK, 8th MK, 9th MK, 19th MK. Four mechanized corps (16th MK, 18th MK, 24th MK, 2nd MK) were practically inactive or burning

gasoline in aimless redeployments. It is unlikely that such a disgrace can be attributed to the category of "objective circumstances", but in life everything was just like that. On the other hand, Romanian tanks (more precisely, French-made tanks from the First World War) did not bother anyone. With this approach (and not taking into account armored vehicles), we come to a force ratio of 1:5.5.

So what other directive, besides the order to move to a decisive offensive, could Timoshenko and Zhukov give with such a numerical superiority?

For reference: on the eve of the Lvov-Sandomierz offensive, in July 1944, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front were armed with 2,200 tanks and self-propelled guns, and the German armies opposing them had 900 tanks and assault guns. For a particularly incredulous reader, we will quote an excerpt from the text of the "Brief History of the Great Patriotic War" (from where we got these figures): "... this was the only case during the war when one

front (i.e. other forces and other tanks on There was no Western Ukraine in the summer of 1944! - M.S.) the task was to defeat an entire group of enemy armies..." [73, p. 336]

But maybe in June 1941 we had bad tanks? Obsolete, "incomparable" with enemy tanks? Soviet scientists, not even "docents with candidates", but academicians with generals, in countless articles, books, memoirs, confidently answer this question as well - our tanks of the "old types" (i.e. T-26, BT, T -28) were not bad, but very bad. So bad that for many decades academicians did not even take them into account in the overall balance of power of the parties. Who has not put their pen and hand to this campaign of disinformation of their own people! So the

Marshal of Victory himself, in his textbook "Memoirs and Reflections", laments the squalor of our tanks: "... they were poorly maneuverable and easily vulnerable to artillery fire ... they ran on gasoline and, therefore, were flammable ... they did not have enough strength armor..." [15]

Before us is a small literary masterpiece. It is impossible to accuse Zhukov of cheating. Everything he said, down to the last letter, is true. Any tank in the world is vulnerable (compared, for example, with a reinforced concrete pillbox) and poorly maneuverable (compared to a helicopter). It depends on what you compare it to.

The wise Zhukov did not compare Soviet tanks with contemporary German ones. He does not at all say that the German tanks were "highly maneuverable and invulnerable", and their engines ran on something other than "highly flammable gasoline." But there can be no doubt that out of a thousand people who read the "memoir" of the great commander, 999 understood this paragraph precisely in such a way that our tanks are

"junk" and "coffins", but the German ones were much better. This is the work of a

master! And General Vladimirsky in a thick, academically solid book [92] writes simply and without fanfare: "By the beginning of the attack on the USSR, Germany undoubtedly had a qualitative superiority over our tanks." So - "unquestionably

had." That's just who had whom: did Germany have a qualitative superiority in tanks, or did party propaganda have our brains for so many years?

### **"The armor is strong, and our tanks are fast..."**

Let's start simple. From definitions. What does the phrase "German tanks were better than ours" even mean? Which German ones are better than which Soviet ones? Is a five-ton tankette PZ-I with two machine guns better than a heavy KB with a three-inch gun? I think that even the most zealous agitpropists will not say such a thing. Or are we talking about the fact that the best German tank PZ-III was superior to our light tank T-27, discontinued in 1934? This is true, but why compare them?

According to the author, a correct analysis of the qualitative state of the tank fleet of the USSR and Germany is possible if at least two conditions are met: - the

compared tanks must be of the same functional purpose, of the same "class"; - it is necessary to

indicate the number of tanks of each class in the total volume of the tank fleet. Guided by these quite obvious

requirements, we will proceed to a comparative analysis of the equipment of the opposing tank groupings. The only one in the southern theater of operations,

the 1st tank group of the Wehrmacht, consisting of the 9th, I, 16th, 13th, 14th tank divisions, had 728 tanks in its arsenal. According to performance

characteristics and functional their purpose can be conditionally divided into FOUR categories: - wedges; - good light tanks; - artillery support tanks;

- good medium tanks. To the category of "tankettes" we will include 8 units of PZ-I, 211 PZ-II and 54 so-called "commander tanks", a total of 273 tanks (which is 38% of the total strength of the 1st tank group). Here is how the main ideologist and creator of the German tank forces G. Guderian describes the history of the development of these "formidable combat vehicles":

"... we considered it necessary to create for the time being such tanks that could be used for training purposes ... this type of tank only allowed the installation of machine guns in a rotating turret. Such tanks, designated PZ-I, could be made by 1934 and used as training vehicles until the battle tanks were ready ... no one, of course, thought in 1932 that with these small training we will have to fight with tanks ... "However, the PZ-I also had quite tangible advantages. Here is how Guderian describes the advantages that his first tanks had in comparison with the plywood and cardboard mock-ups that were used before in the Reichswehr exercises:

"...schoolchildren who used to pierce our mock-ups with their pencils to look inside were amazed by the new armored vehicles..." [65] That's it. The Nazis did not know that not a schoolboy was waiting

for them ahead  
with a pencil, and the Red Army soldier Sereda with an axe.

"The brave man crept up the ditch from the rear, quickly climbed onto the tank and, with blows from a sapper's ax, disabled the machine gun and the crew of the enemy tank." This is not the leading newspaper Pravda. These are lines from the memoirs of General of the Army D.D. Lelyushenko [22]. The illustrious commander of the Great Patriotic War, who graduated from it in Prague as commander of the 4th Guards Tank Army, did not see German tanks in pictures. And the Komsomol member Ivan Pavlovich Sereda is not a fictional person, but a real participant in the war, awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union and a monument in his homeland, in the village of Galitsinovka, for his feat. Let's continue, however, reading Guderian's memoirs: "... in view of the fact that

the production of the main types of tanks dragged on for  
more time than we expected, General Lutz decided to build another intermediate type of tank, armed with a 20-mm automatic cannon and one machine gun. .."

What can these German wedges be compared to? In the absence of anything worse in service with the Red Army than the outdated and already discontinued by the beginning of the war tank T-26, we will compare it with the German PZ-II [hereinafter, materials published in No. 1, 3, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102].

Table 1

Танки	Вес, т	Мощность двигателя, л.с.	Броня, мм лоб/борт	Скорость, км/час	Запас хода, км	Калибр пушки, мм	Дистанция поражения, м
PZ-II	9,50	140	30/20	40	190	20	500
T-26	9,75	90	15/10	35	170	45	1200

By and large, both of them, as they say, "worth each other." Low-powered engines, short range, bulletproof armor - typical light tanks of the early 30s.

Although the thickness of the frontal armor of the PZ-II was twice that of the T-26, it still did not turn into a tank with anti-cannon armor. This circumstance is clearly reflected in the figure in the last column of Table 1. The 20K 45 mm cannon mounted on the T-26 confidently penetrated such armor at a distance of 1200 m, while the German 20 mm KwK-30 cannon projectile retained the necessary speed and armor penetration only at a distance of 300-500 m. This combination of

armament and armor parameters allowed the Soviet tank, with tactically competent use, to shoot the PZ-II with virtually impunity.

At least, this is how General Pavlov described in his report at the December (1940) meeting of the highest command staff the practical experience of fighting German tanks: "... the

experience of the war in Spain taught the Germans and showed them what tanks are needed, because light German tanks in the fight against republican cannon tanks (i.e. our T-26, and then BT-5) were not included in any comparison and were shot mercilessly ... "[14]



It is also worth noting that in terms of ballistic characteristics, the "gun" of the German PZ-II is slightly inferior to the parameters of the Soviet anti-tank 14.5 mm Dyagterev gun. So the most accurate name for the PZ-II would be "self-propelled anti-tank rifle with a machine gun."

To perform the main tasks of the tank - the destruction of enemy firepower and manpower - the projectile of the 20-mm gun mounted on the PZ-II was completely unsuitable, while a "normal" high-explosive fragmentation projectile weighing in 1.4 kg. In addition, every tenth T-26 (to be exact, 1336 out of a total of 11,302 tanks produced) was armed with a heavy flamethrower KS 24/25 with a supply of 350 liters of fire mixture to "burn out" the enemy who had settled in trenches or light field shelters.

Now it remains only to estimate the quantity. As of June 1, 1941, there were 1,894 T-26 tanks against 219 "tankettes" of the 1st Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht [1]. The ratio of numbers in this class of tanks is 1:8.6.

In addition, there were 651 T-37/T-38/T-40 amphibious tanks in the area. Sometimes in military history literature they are put on the same level as the German PZ-I. In our opinion, such a comparison is completely inappropriate. The absence of artillery weapons on a reconnaissance tracked amphibian is understandable and justified. There is no need to rumble a cannon in reconnaissance, but the ability to cross rivers and lakes "without knowing the ford" made the T37 / 38 a unique combat vehicle. Nobody planned to use the T-37, T-38 as a line tank, and these amphibians were, as a rule, in service with the reconnaissance units of rifle and tank divisions. Now let's move on to the second category, to "good lungs

tanks."

In the tank units of the Wehrmacht, this name undoubtedly deserved the PZ-III tank of the D, E, F series, armed with a 37-mm cannon. The 1st tank group of such tanks had exactly 100 units.

The combat vehicle developed in 1936 by Daimler-Benz was really good.

The amenities created by the designers for the work of the crew could be considered a role model. Not a single Soviet, English or American tank of that time had them. The crew

of five included a commander "released" from the duties of a gunner, who had at his disposal a special commander's cupola with all-round optical instruments. And yet, not the convenience of driving is the main

advantage of the tank. As it was absolutely accurately indicated in the popularly beloved song ("The armor is strong, and our tanks are fast, and the enemy knows about the strength of their fire ..."), a tank is armor, mobility, weapons. According to two of these

parameters, our good light tank BT-7 at least not inferior to the "troika".

table 2

Танки	Вес, т	Мощность двигателя, л.с.	Броня, мм лоб/бор	Скорость, км/час	Запас хода, км	Калибр пушки, мм	Дистанция поражения, м
PZ-III E	19,5	300	30/30	40	165	37	700
BT-7	13,8	450	22/10	52/72	230/500	45	1200

Despite the thicker armor, the German tank was clearly inferior to its opponent in terms of the ratio of armament and armor protection. Our BT could hit the PZ-III at a kilometer range, while remaining relatively safe. As in the case of the PZ-II, the choice of 30 mm frontal armor on the PZ-III was an undoubted mistake - it was too little to provide anti-projectile protection, and too much to protect against enemy infantry small arms bullets. Well, in terms of all indicators of mobility, the wheeled-tracked BT-7

was simply the best tank in the world. Even on tracks, it developed an incredible speed for tanks of that era of 52 km / h and had a cruising range at one gas station one and a half times greater than the PZ-III.

Even off-road, the BT went at a speed of 35 km / h, unattainable for tanks of that era, i.e. almost 10 meters per second. But this is not the limit. In 1940, the

BT-7M was put into mass production. This tank was equipped with a 500 hp diesel engine. Along with the well-known advantages of a diesel tank (diesel oil does not explode, and it is not so easy to ignite it), the installation of a more powerful and economical engine made it possible to increase the maximum speed on the tracks to 62 km / h, and the cruising range to 400 km! Having dropped the tracks, on a good road, the BT-7M could accelerate to 86 km / h, and the range on wheels was expressed by a fantastic figure of 900 km. As of June 1, 1941, there were 201 such tanks (BT-7M) in the Kyiv District troops out of a total of 1351 BT-7 tanks. Another 169 BT-7M was part of the neighboring Odessa district, and, given the

mobility of this tank, a quick redeployment of 470 km from Chisinau to Lvov is not

could be considered something impossible.

So, in the "good light tank" category, Soviet troops in the southern theater of operations had a huge quantitative advantage with some qualitative superiority.

Now about what we called "artillery tanks support."

As we noted above, for a tank formation, combat with its own kind is not the only and not even the most important type of combat work, but rather a "necessary evil." Accordingly, in the practice of designing tanks, attempts were made to separate the two main tasks of the tank (fighting enemy tanks and fire support of their own infantry) and create a specialized fighter tank and an artillery support tank, just as in the aviation of that era there was a clear division into a bomber aircraft (the task of which is the destruction of enemy ground forces) and a fighter aircraft (whose task is to destroy aircraft). So, for example, on the basis of the T-34 tank, it was supposed (Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR No. 1216-506 / ss of May 5, 1941) to create a tank fighter armed with a long-barreled 57-mm cannon capable of penetrating 80 mm armor at a distance of 1 km. Serial production of this "fighter" was quickly curtailed,

because in the course of

military operations, it turned out that the Wehrmacht simply did not have tanks with such armor (however, several dozen T-34/57s took part in the battle for

Moscow). But the "artillery support tanks" were mass-produced for a long time both here and in Germany. A characteristic distinguishing feature of this class of tanks were short-barreled three-inch guns. The initial velocity of the projectile and, consequently, the armor penetration of these guns was very low (the 45-mm Soviet 20K tank gun surpassed the 75-mm German KwK-37 gun at all ranges in armor penetration!), But a "full-weight" 6-kilogram projectile fell on the enemy infantry. The 1st Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht had 100 artillery support tanks PZ-IV - twenty tanks in each division. And as of June 1, 1941, the troops of the Kyiv OVO were armed with 215 three-tower T-28 tanks and 48 five-tower giants T-35. Total 263 tanks.

Despite the same functional purpose, outwardly they were very different combat vehicles.

\Table 3

Танки	Вес, т	Мощность двигателя, л.с.	Броня, мм лоб/борт	Скорость, км/час	Запас хода, км	Калибр пушки, мм	Габариты, м
PZ-IV	22	300	50/30	40	200	75	5,9 × 2,9 × 2,7
T-28	27,8	500	30/20	40	200	76	7,4 × 2,8 × 2,8

The Soviet three-turreted tank T-28 was much heavier and as much as 1.5 meters longer.

All this made him very clumsy on the battlefield compared to the German PZ-IV. To combat

enemy infantry, our T-28 (due to the presence of two separate machine gun turrets) was much better armed. In addition, some of the latest T-28s were armed with a long-barreled 76-mm cannon, which "transferred" it to the category of full-fledged medium tanks.

Not everything is simple with armor protection. At first glance, the German PZ IV has much thicker armor. Upon closer analysis, it turns out that the "four" series A, B, C, D, E, produced from 1938 to the beginning of 1941, had typical bulletproof armor: forehead - 30 mm, side - 20 mm. Subsequently, the frontal armor of the hull was reinforced with 20–30 mm armor plates. But our T-28s, after the bloody experience of the Finnish war, were shielded with additional armor (up to 60 or even up to 80 mm) and were in no way inferior to the PZ-IV in this respect.

The wide tracks of the Soviet tank provided him with better maneuverability. The ground pressure of the 28-ton T-28 was even lower (0.72 vs. 1.03 kg/cm) than that of the lighter German PZ-IV. In general, in terms

of the entire set of tactical and technical characteristics, these tanks are approximately equivalent. But Soviet historians stubbornly called (and still call) the PZ-IV "heavy tank", and the presence of hundreds of T-28 tanks in service with the Red Army is simply not noticed.

But in vain. In capable hands, it was a very "noticeable" combat vehicle. Army General D.D. Lelyushenko in October 1941 took command of the 5th Army, which entered into battle with German tank divisions on the legendary Borodino field near Moscow. In his memoirs, he recalls, as a great success, how:

"... sent Major A. Efimov for reconnaissance. An hour and a half later, he happily reported - there are 16 T-28 tanks without engines, but with serviceable guns ... For us, this was just a godsend. Of course, it is necessary to use these tanks as fixed firing points, bury them in the ground and place them in the direction of Borodino - Mozhaisk, where the enemy will deliver the main tank attack ... "

The decision turned out to be correct. Continue reading memoirs Lelyushenko:

"... the fourth tank is already being fired at close range from a T-28 by Sergeant Serebryakov ... The enemy tried to enter the Mozhaisk area, but was met by direct fire from our dug-in T-28 tanks. Having lost a lot of equipment, the enemy stopped for a short time ... "[22]

Like this: 16 T-28 hulls without engines are "just a godsend", and 292 serviceable T-28 tanks (with engines, of course) that were in service with the Red Army in the summer of 1941 are a "trifle" that does not even deserve mention ...

After that, is it any wonder that our "historians" don't even remember about 48 five-tower T-35s, which were in service with the 67th and 68th tank regiments of the 34th tank division of the 8th mechanized corps of the Southwestern Front. How important is fifty steel giants, surpassing in the total number of tank guns (48 three-inch guns and 96 barrels of 45-mm 20K guns) any of the tank divisions of the 1st Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht! There is no doubt that in all indicators of mobility this "land battleship" was inferior

to any motorcycle (later we will see how the command of the Southwestern Front drove the 8th mechanized corps, including its heavy tanks, along a "snake curve" of hundreds of kilometers) . But is the heavy tank to blame for the fact that they tried to use it SO? But even being simply buried in the ground, 48 five-tower monsters could form a fortified area in a matter of hours, almost impenetrable for enemy infantry and light tanks.

And finally, the best thing that was in service with the tank divisions of the Wehrmacht in the summer of 1941: good medium tanks PZ-III of the H and J series.

"The best" is not the opinion of an amateur author, but the conclusion of an authoritative state commission (48 engineers, intelligence officers, designers), which, under the leadership of People's Commissar Tevosyan, traveled three times in 1939-40, climbed around and, sorry, sniffed German tank factories and of all that I saw, I selected only the PZ-III tank for purchase. And this is not because Comrade Stalin spared the money. For a good deed - for the purchase or theft of Western military technology - Stalin did not spare money. In the same Germany, under the guise of a friendship agreement, were purchased:

"Messerschmitt-109" five pieces, "Messerschmitt-110" six pieces, two "Junkers-88", two "Dornier-215", one newest experimental "Messerschmitt-209" (the Germans probably simply didn't have a second copy, otherwise they would have taken it), a battery of 105-mm anti-aircraft guns, heavy 210-mm howitzers, drawings of the newest, largest in the world battleship Bismarck, special, stainless steel sea water 88-mm guns for submarines, six periscopes, hydroacoustic equipment, optical rangefinders for naval artillery, 330-mm ship gun mounts, tank radio stations,

sights for dive bombing, 4 sets of instruments for ballistic testing of artillery systems, etc. and so on. And only one single

German tank of the same type. All

the other types of our engineers were simply not interested.

The "best" PZ-III of the H and J series became due to two circumstances: the new 50-mm KwK-38 cannon and 50 mm thick frontal armor of the hull. Initially, the H series went into production with the usual 30 mm frontal armor for German tanks, but then an additional 30 mm sheet was welded onto it in front, so in place of this "blotch" the armor protection of the tank reached 60 mm. And this means that the PZ-III, armored in this way, turned into a tank with anti-ballistic armor - if our "forty-five" could penetrate such armor, it was only at an extremely short distance of 100 m, which is not always possible in battle and is always deadly.

However, let's not forget that a tank on the battlefield is not a tram on rails. When moving over rough terrain, it was difficult for the "troika" not to expose its high side and turret to fire, protected by 30-mm armor, which (we repeat this again) all our light tanks and even cannon armored vehicles pierced with a 20K cannon projectile at a kilometer range. So the statement about the anti-ballistic armor of the PZ-III series H and J

is rather stretched. There can't be too many of the best. A-priori. So, in the 3rd Panzer Group of the

Wehrmacht there were no tanks of this type. No one. The 4th Panzer Group had only 71 PZ-IIIs out of a total of 602 tanks. In the 1st tank group of good medium tanks PZ-III of the H and J series, there could be 255 pieces. Such an indefinite wording - "could be" - is due to the fact that the sources known to

the author indicate only the number of "triples" armed with a new 50-mm cannon. These are the tanks in the 1st Panzer Group and there were 255 units. But the fact is that the PZ-III tanks of the early series (E, F, G) with 30-mm bulletproof frontal armor were re-equipped with this gun. Therefore, assuming that all 255 PZ-IIIs with a 50-mm cannon had anti-projectile frontal armor, we greatly overestimate the quality level of the German tank divisions operating in the southern theater of operations.

In the mechanized corps of the Southwestern Front, 555 T-34 tanks should be classified as good medium tanks. Another 50 "thirty-fours" were in the 2nd MK of the Southern

Front near Chisinau. As you can see, there were few of the best in the Red Army. Only twice as many as the Germans. But even this is a lot, if we take into account the absolute superiority in tactical and technical characteristics.

Table 4

Танки	Вес, т	Мощ- ность двигате- ля, л.с.	Бро- ня, мм лоб/ борт	Ско- рость, км/час	За- пас хо- да, км	Ка- либр пуш- ки, мм	Дис- танция пора- жения, м
PZ-III J	21,6	300	50/30	40	145	50	почти 0
T-34	28,5	500, ди- зель	45/40	50	300	76	1000

Decisively in all the main indicators - mobility, armor protection, armament - the T-34 surpassed the best German tank PZ-III of the J series in June 41. The long-barreled 76-

mm cannon F-34 pierced the frontal armor of the most protected German tanks (PZ- III series J, PZ-IV series F) at a distance of 1000-1200 meters. While NOT ONE Wehrmacht tank could hit the "thirty-four" even from 500 meters. When firing at extremely short distances (100-300 meters), the best German 50-mm KwK-38 tank gun could theoretically penetrate armor 50-45 mm thick. But the armor plate of the T-34 hull, although it had a thickness of "only" 45 mm (the cast tower had a wall thickness of 52 mm), was installed at a steep slope (60-40 degrees on the forehead and sides), which even purely geometrically increased the effective armor thickness up to 60-65 mm. In practice, such a large slope of the armor usually caused the armor-piercing "blank" to ricochet.



The German 50-mm cannon could hit the frontal armor of the T-34 only with the use of a special sub-caliber projectile with a tungsten carbide core (armor penetration up to 65 mm at a distance of 300 m), but due to the shortage of tungsten, such ammunition was very rare.

Thanks to the wide (550 mm) tracks of the T-34, although it weighed 6-7 tons more than the heaviest German tanks, it created a ground pressure of only 0.72 kg / cm (versus 0.9-1.0 kg / cm from the German PZ-III). Hence, a higher cross-country ability, mud and snow. And finally, the main "secret" of the

T-34: a compact and very powerful diesel engine. Even with the engines of thousands of captured Soviet tanks as a role model, the backward German industry was never able to do anything of the sort. Germany both started and ended the war on "flammable" tanks with gasoline engines. But diesel is not only relative fire safety. This is also low fuel consumption, which allowed the "thirty-four" to travel more than 300 kilometers at one gas station, which corresponded to the distance from Lviv to Radom, Krakow, Kosice. And in addition to all this, a very heavy (by German standards) machine developed a speed greater than the lightest and fastest German PZ-II. All these arguments are by no means abstract theorizing. In the memoirs of German "practitioners" (generals Guderian, Blumentritt, Goth, Schneider) it is easy to find

a lot of evidence of the shock that the Wehrmacht experienced when they met the new

Soviet tank:

"... in 1941, these tanks were the most powerful of all that existed ... T-34 tanks, as if nothing had happened, passed through the battle formations of the 7th Infantry Division, reached the artillery positions and literally crushed the guns located there .. ... our anti-tank guns turned out to be powerless against Russian T-34 tanks ... it came to panic ... "

This is a memoir, so to speak, fiction. And here is a serious document: "Instructions for all parts of the Eastern Front on the fight of our tanks with the Russian T-34." Released May 26, 1942

command of the mobile troops (Schnellen Truppen) of the Wehrmacht. This is what pleased the command of their soldiers:

“...T-34 is faster, more maneuverable, has better off-road capability than our PZ-III and PZ-IV. His armor is stronger. The penetrating power of its 7.62 cm guns is superior to our 5 and 7.5 cm guns. The successful location of the inclined armor plates increases the likelihood of ricochet ... Fighting the T-34 with our 5 cm KwK-38 cannon is possible only at short distances by shooting at the side or stern of the tank .... it is necessary to shoot so that the projectile is perpendicular to the surface of the armor ... » [87] Excellent instruction.

Completely accurate and

true. As noted above, if you shoot at a right angle to the side armor of the "thirty-four", then the KwK-38 can pierce it. From 300 meters.

But in the instructions (despite the vaunted German punctuality) there are no instructions on how to bring the gun barrel of a German tank into such a position? If there is no heavy cargo helicopter at hand, then there is only one way: climb a steep hill (with a slope angle of at least 40 degrees) and ask the crew of a Soviet tank to drive closer and turn around. Yes, it is clear that it was not from a good life that the command sent such "instructions" to the troops ...

Having developed a tank with such characteristics, it would be easy to become dizzy with success. But it was not in vain that Comrade Stalin warned graduates of his military academies as early as May 5, 1941: "... states perish if they turn a blind eye to shortcomings, get carried away by their successes, rest on their laurels ..." [69, p. 650] Therefore, not at all

calmed down by the production of the T-34, on the same day, December 19, 1939, by the same decree No. 443 / ss, the heavy tank KV-1 was adopted by the Red Army. If the T-34 can still be compared, albeit at a very big stretch, with the best German

PZ-III tank of the J series at the start of the Soviet-German war, then the monstrous 48-ton KB monster was generally incomparable with any German tank. Frontal armor of 95 mm and side armor of 75 mm made it absolutely invulnerable to tanks and the best (50 mm) anti-tank guns

of the Wehrmacht. The forced diesel V-2k developed a power of 600 hp, which allowed the steel giant to move along the highway at a speed

only slightly inferior to the speed of light German tanks (35 km / h). The same as on the T-34, the 76-mm Grabina F-34 cannon could shoot any German tanks in the summer of 1941, at any distance, from any angle, as a training target. Incredibly, even in terms of cross-country ability, a heavy Soviet tank (with a specific ground pressure of only 0.77 kg / cm<sup>3</sup>) was superior to its opponents. As can be judged from the military diary of F. Halder, the

German generals did not even immediately believe in the existence of a tank with such parameters. But the German soldiers any doubts disappeared very quickly. "When our tanks, especially KB, appear, the infantry flees, and the tanks don't accept battle ... KB tanks confuse the enemy, and in all cases his tanks retreated" - these are the lines from the report on the combat operations of the 10th Panzer Division 15 th MK in June 41-

year.

And there are spots in the sun, and our KB was not a "superweapon" without a single flaw. It is no coincidence that by the end of the war it became almost impossible to meet this tank at the front.

The main trouble of the 50-ton giant was a weak and unreliable transmission (torn one to one from the American A-23 tank fifteen years ago). Only after the KB-1C modification with a new gearbox and a weight reduced to 42.5 tons was launched at the end of 1942, this tank got a "second wind". "So that's why the Germans reached Moscow," a quick-witted reader will exclaim, "the transmission on the KB

was bad!" Let's not jump to conclusions. For this, in addition to tanks, tank units also have commanders, so that each vehicle is used taking into account both its strengths and weaknesses. Of course, not every KB could withstand such "circular races" that the command of the Southwestern Front arranged for its mechanized corps (we will talk about this in more detail later). In the same place, where a heavy tank was used wisely and for its intended purpose, it revealed all its enormous combat capabilities. A lot has been written about the phenomenal achievements of KB. Here we will confine ourselves to only mentioning two episodes from his glorious combat biography.

The former commander of the 41st Panzer Corps of the Wehrmacht, General Reinhardt, writes:

“... from three sides we fired at the iron monsters of the Russians, but everything was in vain ... After a long battle, we had to retreat in order to avoid complete defeat. The Russian giants were coming closer and closer. One of them approached our tank, hopelessly bogged down in a swampy pond (a light German tank got stuck, and a heavy KB "approached." - M.S). Without any hesitation, the black monster drove over the tank and pressed its tracks into the mud. At that moment, a 150-mm howitzer arrived ... The gunners opened fire on him with direct fire and achieved a hit - it was like lightning struck. The tank stopped ... Suddenly, someone from the crew of the gun yelled heart-rendingly: "He went again!" Indeed, the tank came to life and began to approach the gun. Another minute, and the caterpillars of the tank, shining with metal, like a toy, pressed the

howitzer into the ground ... "On August 19, 1941, the crew of tank KB No. 864 from the 1st Tank Battalion of the 1st Tank Regiment of the 1st Tank Division (the same story about the polar route of which our story began) under the command of senior lieutenant Zinovy Kolobanov hid in ambush on the road from Luga to Gatchina. There, a meeting of a single KB with a column of forty German tanks took place. When this unprecedented battle ended, 22 German tanks were smoking in the field, and our KB, having received 156 direct hits from enemy shells, returned to the location of its

division. Of course, the outstanding achievements of the best of the best will never become the average norm. That is why the author does not at all call for multiplying the number of heavy KB tanks that were in service with the troops of the Southwestern Front (and there were 278 units) by 22 and comparing the resulting number with the total number of tanks in the 1st tank group of the Wehrmacht. That doesn't happen in war. And such a number (6116) of serviceable tanks was not in all parts of the Wehrmacht from Brest in Normandy to Brest in Belarus. Therefore, summing up this chapter, we will confine ourselves to a simple and fairly reasonable conclusion: the mechanized corps of the Southwestern Front had a multiple numerical superiority over the 1st Wehrmacht Panzer Group with an absolute qualitative superiority in tanks.

With minimally reasonable management of this gigantic tank horde, the oncoming tank battle in Western Ukraine should have ended with only one result - the mechanized corps of the Red Army

they should have simply crushed and smeared the Kleist tank group on the wall. Like a cockroach.

That's pretty  
much how it all happened. Just the opposite.

## Results

Two weeks have passed since the beginning of the war. The tank battle in the "triangle" Radekhov - Brody - Dubno died down. The repeated counterattack of the mechanized corps of the 5th Army also ended. The troops of the German Army Group "South" broke through into the operational depth of the defense of the Southwestern Front and rapidly approached the so-called "Stalin Line" (fortified areas on the old Soviet-Polish border). By the evening of July 8, the Novograd-Volynsky fortified area was broken through on most of its front, the 3rd motorized corps of the enemy rushed to Zhitomir, and the 48th motorized corps of the Wehrmacht captured Berdichev on the morning of July 8, thus frustrating all the plans of the Soviet command for a systematic withdrawal of the defeated divisions Yu-3. f. beyond the line of the old state border. In this situation, on July 7, 1941, the following document was drawn up: "Report of the Commander of the Southwestern

Front to the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army on the situation of the mechanized corps of the front" [8]. The document is small. We will present it almost in full. For the convenience of the reader, next to each geographical name, the distance from the western border will be indicated, and next to the

numbers of the remainder of the armored vehicles in the mechanized corps, the percentage of losses (in relation to the number at the beginning of the war) will be indicated. In addition, the mechanized corps will be listed in the order that was adopted by us in the second chapter, i.e. first the mechanized corps of the first echelon from north to south, then the two mechanized corps of the reserve of the South-Western Front.

Data on the 16th MK and the 24th MK, which did not take part in the tank battle, will be skipped. So: "Owls. secretly to the Chief  
of the

General Staff of

the Red Army I report on the state of the mechanized corps: 22nd mechanized

Corps is concentrated in the area

Korosten (320 km), having in its composition 340 combat vehicles (52%).

The 15th mechanized corps is concentrated in the Berezovka area (300 km), having 66 combat vehicles (91%) in its composition. The

4th mechanized corps is concentrated in the Ivnitsa region (360 km), having 126 combat vehicles (87%) in its composition. The 8th

mechanized corps is concentrated in the Kazatin area (380 km), having 43 combat vehicles (95%) in its composition. The 9th

mechanized corps is concentrated in the Korosten area (320 km), having 164 combat vehicles (48%) in its composition.

The 19th mechanized corps is concentrated in the Korchevka area (270 km), having 66 combat vehicles (85%) in its composition. In

personnel during the period of fighting since 22.6.41, all corps have lost about 25-30%. The

Military Council of the South-Western Front considers it expedient ... to withdraw the directorates of mechanized corps and tank divisions, corps and divisional units, as well as tank regiments of tank divisions and all rear institutions to the areas of Nizhyn, Priluki, Piryatin, Yagotin ... "(This is already beyond the Dnieper, 250 km east of those areas in which the remnants of the mechanized corps were located on July 7.) Signatures: Kirponos, Purkaev,

Khrushchev. First off, a little clarification.

At first glance, it may seem that the situation in the 9th MK and 22nd MK was much better than the average. They seemed to have lost "only" half of their military equipment.

Alas, these figures reflect only the absence of the Yu-3 command. f. (which already on July 6 moved beyond the Dnieper, to Brovary near Kiev) of reliable information about the state of the units entrusted to them. Already eight days later, on July 15, 1941, in the report of the head of the Yu-3 Armored Directorate. f. "On the state and availability of the material part of the mechanized corps of the front" it was reported that the 22nd MK had only 30 tanks (instead of 340), and the 9th MK had 32 tanks (instead of 164). Considering that during this week the mechanized corps were practically withdrawn from the combat zone beyond the Dnieper, such a "downsizing" was most likely due not to combat losses, but simply to receiving more reliable reports. This assumption is quite consistent with the materials of the monograph

Vladimirsky (at that time - deputy chief of the operational department of the headquarters of the 5th Army, to which the 22nd MK and 9th MK were subordinate in the first days of the war), who writes that by June 29 only 153 tank, and in the 9th MK - 32 tanks [92]. But for June 29, the day of July 1 came, when the 22nd mechanized corps launched a second counterattack on Dubno.

And at the same time suffered real (and not paper-reported) losses. Comments on these reports are almost superfluous. This is destruction. Unheard of, unparalleled destruction. In just two weeks, the Southwestern Front lost more than **four thousand tanks** (more than the total number of Wehrmacht tanks on the entire Eastern Front). There is no war without losses. But what is **the result of the counterattack** of the mechanized corps of the Southwestern Front, for which they paid with the loss of 80% of their tank fleet?

The authors of the infamous 12-volume "History of the Second World War" tell gullible readers that "the Nazi offensive in the direction of the main attack of Army Group South was slowed down ... their main forces were drawn into protracted battles ..." Again and again we repeat one and the

same question - compared to what? In May 1940, having

concentrated the most powerful armored fist (nine tank divisions, 2574 tanks) on the 150-km section from Liege to Saarbrücken, the Germans broke through the defenses of the French and Belgian armies and in two weeks, from May 10 to 24, reached La Manchu, having overcome 300-350 km.

The average advance rate is 26 km per day. This Soviet historians liked to call and now still call it "the triumphal march of the Wehrmacht in Western Europe." Why should the

breakthrough of the 1st Panzer Group 300-350 km deep into Western Ukraine in the same two weeks in the summer of 1941 be called "protracted battles"?

According to the pre-war plans of the Soviet command, the troops of the Southwestern Front on the 10-12th day of the offensive were to reach the line of the Vistula and Danube rivers, which corresponds to an average advance rate of 10-12 km per day. These are plans. But in reality, the "slowed down" offensive of the German Army Group "South" in depth

Ukraine went at a pace of 20-25 km per day. And why don't our "historians" remember how many days (or months) it took to liberate the western regions of Ukraine in 1944? Already on July 15, 1941, signed by

Zhukov, a directive from the Headquarters was issued to disband the mechanized corps. Their short history ended there. And what about the enemy? Perhaps, after these "protracted battles", only horns and legs remained from his tank grouping? No, the history of the 1st Panzer Group of the

Wehrmacht was just beginning. Having broken through the line of fortified areas on the old border and reached Kiev and Belaya Tserkov, the German tank divisions turned 90 degrees and rushed to the south of Ukraine, to the rear of the randomly retreating troops of the 6th and 12th armies of the Southwestern Front. In order to "strengthen the leadership", the Headquarters decided on July 25 to transfer these two armies to the Southern Front. While the big bosses were figuring out who was responsible for what, in the first days of August both armies (more precisely, their remnants) were surrounded in the Uman region and surrendered. About a hundred thousand people were captured, including Major General Ponedelin, commander of the 12th Army, and Lieutenant General Muzychenko, commander of the 6th Army. After another

month of fighting (by September 4, 1941), the irretrievable losses of the 1st tank group (1st TGr) of the Wehrmacht amounted to **186 tanks**, i.e. ONE TWENTIETH of the losses of the Southwestern Front in the first two weeks of the war. In addition, hundreds of tanks were knocked out and temporarily disabled, so that the total number of combat-ready tanks in the 1st TGr was halved - to 391 units [11].

In this composition, the 1st TGr crossed the Dnieper in the Kremenchug region and on September 12, 1941 rushed to the north, towards the 2nd tank group advancing across the Desna River. On September 15, they joined in the Lubna-Lokhvitsa area (170 km east of Kyiv), thus surrounding the 21.5, 37, 26 and 38 armies. According to the reports of the Wehrmacht command, more than six hundred thousand people fell into German captivity in a giant "Kiev bag". On September 20, near the village of Shumeikovo near the town of Lokhvitsa, the commander of the Southwestern Front, Colonel General M.P., was killed. Kirponos, chief of staff of the front, Major General V.A. Tupikov and member of the Military Council of the Front M.A. Burmistenko.



Not stopping there, the Kleist tank group turned around again, this time 180 degrees, and with virtually no operational pause, on September 24 began an offensive south, towards the Sea of Azov. Having advanced 450 km in 15 days, the Germans surrounded and captured another 100 thousand people in the Melitopol region, then, turning 90 degrees, went another 300 km to the east and by November 21, 1941 occupied Taganrog and Rostov-on-Don. Total: more than one and a half thousand kilometers only in a straight line (not counting the maneuvering inevitable during hostilities), along Soviet "anti-tank" roads, on tanks with narrow tracks and low-powered gasoline engines. Do you need any other evidence that the counterattack of the mechanized corps of the Southwestern Front in June 1941 not only did not lead to the defeat, but did not even have a noticeable effect on the combat effectiveness of the Kleist tank group? Returning to the question

of the losses of the mechanized corps of the Red Army, we note that by the end of 1941, on the entire Eastern Front, the Wehrmacht irretrievably lost 2765 tanks and assault guns, i.e. for half a year of the war, German losses never reached the level of losses of only Yu-3. f. during the first two weeks of fighting.

And yet, in one respect, the situation on the Southwestern Front was qualitatively different from that which had developed in the first weeks of the war on the Western Front. In Belarus, the Germans, advancing with two tank groups from Brest and Vilnius to Minsk, were able to **surround** most of the Red Army forces. The defeat of the troops on the battlefield was supplemented by the pogrom carried out by Stalin among the command of the Western Front. As a result, there are almost no staff documents or well-informed witnesses left, and the historian has to reconstruct the picture of events in much the same way as paleobiologists reconstruct the skeleton of a dinosaur from a pair of

fossilized bones. But in Ukraine, events developed differently. On the entire southern theater of operations from Polesie to the Black Sea, the Wehrmacht command had only one tank group at its disposal, and the Germans failed to carry out a major operation to encircle the Soviet troops in the first days of the war. Even the Soviet divisions, which had lost almost all military equipment, were able to retreat to the east, retaining their command, battle flags and documents.

And Stalin's reaction to the failure of the counter-offensive of the Southwestern Front was incomprehensibly mild. All commanders of Yu-3 mechanized corps. f., who were destined to stay alive, went on promotion. The commander of the 9th MK K.K. stepped above all. Rokossovsky, who ended the war as a marshal and twice Hero of the Soviet Union, commanded many fronts and the Victory

Parade. A great future awaited the commander of the 4th MK Vlasov. After the disbandment of the mechanized corps, Vlasov was appointed commander of the most powerful on Yu-3. f. 37th Army, after the defeat of this army in the "Kiev bag", he successfully commands the 20th Army in the battle for Moscow, then Stalin hands him the 2nd shock army - and here the brilliant career ended and rolled downhill, straight to the gallows, on which this most famous traitor and ended his days.

The commander of the 8th mechanized corps Ryabyshev soared rapidly up the ranks. After the disbandment of the corps, he commands the 38th Army, and from August 30, the 41st, the entire Southern Front! The vacated post of commander of the 38th Army was taken by another former commander of the mechanized corps - N.V. Feklenko (19th MK).

The commander of the 1st artillery anti-tank brigade (APTБ) of the South-Western Front, K.S., also rose to the rank of marshal's stars. Moskalenko, and head of the operational department of the Yu-3 headquarters. f. THEIR. Bagramyan, and the commander of the 20th Panzer

Division (9th MK) M.E. Katukov. As a result, there is no shortage of memoirs and scientific-historical literature describing the June battles in Western Ukraine. Many valuable documents also survived, including the reports of the commanders of tank divisions of the 15th, 19th and 22nd mechanized corps published on the website of the Mechanized Corps of the Red Army.

In a word - there is something to work with. But, before we begin a detailed analysis of the real events of this, the third in our presentation and the most powerful in reality, "Stalin's blow", we will deal with what actually did not happen. Just so that we do not have to return to the discussion of these myths.

**About what was not**

As you may have guessed, dear reader, we will again talk about the mighty German aviation, the crushing "first disarming strike" and other miracles. In part 2, we tried, but did

not find any confirmation of the terrible stories about how "during a sudden blow, Soviet tankers were shot even before they reached their tanks, and the tanks were burned or captured without crews ..." . Nothing like this was seen on the Western Front.

But, perhaps, V. Suvorov had in mind the beginning of hostilities in Western Ukraine? Maybe it was in the zone of the Southwestern Front that "Soviet reconnaissance planes could not take to the skies ... Our Cyclops had his eye gouged out. Our cyclops is blind. He swings his steel fists and roars in impotent rage..."?

Who knocked out the eye of the Cyclops? And what? The 5th Luftwaffe Aviation Corps, operating jointly with Army Group South over Ukraine, had seven bomber and five fighter air groups. In total (taking into account temporarily out-of-service aircraft) in their composition on the morning of June 22, 1941, there were 266 "horizontal" bombers (163 Ju-88 and 103 He-111) and 174 Messerschmitt-109 fighters [24]. There was not a single

Ju-87 dive bomber (this symbol of the "blitzkrieg", beloved by all documentary filmmakers), not a single Me-110 bomber fighter over the Southwestern Front. From this, in particular, it follows that the capabilities of the 5th Luftwaffe Air Corps for bombing mobile point targets (which are tanks and armored vehicles) were close to zero.

German aviation was opposed by the Air Force of the Southwestern Front and two (2nd and 4th) long-range bomber air corps, numbering at least 944 bombers (excluding obsolete heavy TB-3s) and 1166 fighters (including 253 of the latest MiG-3 and Yak-1) [23]. That is, even in terms of the number of "new types" fighters, the Soviet Air Force had a one and a half times superiority in numbers over the enemy!

And this is only the beginning, since according to the pre-war "Plan for the Cover of the Mobilization and Deployment of Troops of the Kiev Special Military District", it was planned to transfer eight more air divisions to Ukraine by the 4th day of mobilization and bring the total number

aviation in the southern theater of operations (taking into account the aviation of the Southern Front, reconnaissance aircraft and attack aircraft) up to 6760 combat aircraft [16].

The Germans could not overcome such a huge numerical superiority on the move. No matter how hard they tried, and no matter how much the chaos that plunged the entire control and communications system of the Southwestern Front helped them in this. As a result, the command of the 5th AK, which had to attack with very frail forces more than 160 airfields, which had Yu-3 aviation west of the Dnieper. front [16], there were simply no forces and means to also chase thousands of Soviet tanks, armored vehicles, tractors and guns. As a result, the deployment of the mechanized corps of the Southwestern Front and their advance to the initial areas for the offensive occurred almost without interference from German aviation. From north to south, from Polissya to the Carpathians, the real picture of events was as follows [8, 61, 92, 105]: - 22nd MK. The corps headquarters, the 19th Panzer and 215th Motorized Divisions were stationed in Rovno before the war

(about 150 km east of the border). Nothing is known about the losses in the first hours of the war. The forward 41st Panzer

Division was located much to the west, in the Vladimir-Volynsky region (15 km from the border). As noted above, in part 2, this division suffered losses: "... at 4.00 on 22.6.41 it was fired upon by enemy long-range artillery fire and during the mobilization period had the loss of 10 fighters killed." - 15th MK. Area of pre-war deployment: Brody - Kremenets (100-135 km from the border). At 4:45 a.m., a notification was received that German troops had crossed our state border, a combat alert was announced, and a package with a directive from the headquarters of the Kyiv Special Military District was opened. By the way, the report on the combat operations of the 15th mechanized corps also indicates the

date of approval of the operational plan: May 31, 1941. Corps divisions began to enter the areas of concentration in accordance with this directive. The only mention of the losses of the first day of the war is found in the report of the commander of the 37th Panzer Division: "... at the end of the day on June 22, 1941, in the concentration area, parts of the division were bombarded by enemy aircraft for the first time. The area of concentration of the 73rd tank regiment was bombed especially hard, since the latter was concentrated near the Brodsky airfield, however

there were no car losses. Machine gun fire from the air killed 2 human..."

- 4th MK. Area of pre-war deployment: Lvov (80 km west of the border of that time). This mechanized corps was the first to move. Already on June 20, 1941, the 8th Panzer and 81st Motorized Divisions were raised on alert, at the same time, the anti-aircraft artillery battalions of these divisions were recalled from the Lvov camp, which immediately received an order to cover the location of ground troops from the air. The 32nd Panzer Division, stationed on the eastern outskirts of Lvov, was alerted at 2 am on June 22 and began advancing along the streets of the city towards the Yavorovsky highway. The corps motorcycle regiment left the main deployment site even earlier, since already at 9:45 a.m. it entered into battle with the Germans who had crossed the San River near the town of Lyatsk, 70 kilometers west of Lvov. There is no information about losses on the march from enemy bombing. - 8th MK. Area of pre-war deployment: Drohobych - Stry (70-100 km from

the border). Already on June 19, 1941, the corps commander D.I.

Ryabyshev ordered the withdrawal of most of the personnel from the barracks in Drohobych to the area of concentration. On June 20, by order of the headquarters of the Kyiv Special Military District, all tanks, even those that were mothballed, were fully refueled and received ammunition. At three o'clock in the morning on June 22, an order was received from the army headquarters to "be ready and wait for the order." At 10 o'clock in the morning an order was received, in accordance with which the corps was alerted and by the end of the day went to the border river San west of Sambir. In the early morning of June 22, German aircraft bombed Drohobych, but, as the corps commissar (deputy commander for political affairs, head of the political propaganda

department) N.K. Popel, "parts of the corps were almost not affected by the bombing." During the march to the deployment area, one motorized rifle regiment of the 7th motorized division came under enemy air strikes and lost 70 people killed and 120 wounded. And these were the biggest losses on June 22 among the personnel of all Yu-3 mechanized corps. f. The forces of German aviation in this sector were so

are few in number, that already, describing the situation in the second half of the day on June

24, Popel notes: "... enemy aviation began to clearly neglect us. Planes indifferently flew over our columns, saving their ammunition for some other purpose ... "(105)

Of course, the point here is not in "neglect" (the 8th MK in terms of the number of tanks surpassed the entire 1st Wehrmacht TGr), but in an elementary lack

of forces, aircraft, bombs. In order for the reader to independently assess how such losses from the "first disarming strike" could reduce the combat effectiveness of the mechanized corps, we will indicate the number of

some of them:

22nd MK -

24,087; 15th MK - 33,935;

4th MK - 28,097; 8th MK - 31,927 people [8]. These are the data for June 1, 1941. Considering that covert mobilization was in full swing in the country since the end of May 1941, on June 22 the number of personnel

of these mechanized corps was probably even higher. - 16th **MK**. The corps was part of the 12th Army, stretching along a 350-kilometer front in the Carpathians, from the Uzhok Pass to the border with Moldova. In the first days of the war, this was one of the most passive sectors, in which the small Hungarian units carried out harassing military operations in order to pin down the forces of the 12th Army. General B. Arushanyan, in those days the chief of staff of the 12th Army, writes directly: "On June 22, 1941, the enemy did not take active actions against the troops of the army." The divisions of the 16th MK, deployed in the area of Stanislav (Ivano-Frankivsk) - Chernivtsi - Kamenets Podolsk, only

on the morning of June 23 entered into the first skirmishes with the enemy. - 9th MK. The corps was listed in the reserve of the front and was deployed in the deep rear, in the Shepetovka-Novograd-Volynsky region (220-250 km west of the border). On the morning of June 22, 1941,

acting according to the pre-war operational plan, the corps began advancing to Rovno-Lutsk. K.K. Rokossovsky writes in his memoirs: "... German avi

bombers passing over us at high altitude, oddly enough, without fighter escort" [111]. There is little strange in this. The few Luftwaffe fighters were tied up in battles over the border airfields, besides, the range of the German "Messers" simply did not allow them to patrol the sky over Shepetovka.

- 19th MK. The corps was listed in the reserve of the front and was deployed in the rear, in the Zhitomir-Berdichev-Kazatin region (350-380 km from the border). The impact of the enemy on the first day of the war was not subjected. The order to advance to the Rovno region was received only in the evening, at 18 o'clock on June 22, 1941. When making a march, the columns of the 40th Panzer Division west of the city of Novograd-Volynsky "were repeatedly subjected to enemy air attacks, as a result of which 2 people were killed and 4 people wounded." Further, the report on the combat operations of the 40th TD of the 19th mechanized corps states that on June 24-25, "when the division moved to the Klevan area, the enemy repeatedly tried to stop the movement of the division with an air attack ... As a result of the bombing, the division had no losses ... » During the advance to Rovno, the 43rd Panzer Division suffered no losses from enemy aircraft (as far as can be judged from the commander's report on the division's combat operations). That's all that really happened. This was in reality "a

sudden disarming strike by German aircraft." Here the author considers it necessary to apologize for the intonation in which this chapter is written. Of course, for the families of the Red Army soldiers, in whose homes the first funerals came, these victims were the greatest grief in their lives, and not "isolated losses." But military history is written in its own, rather specific language. And in this language, the outcome of the first day of the war can be indicated in only one way: the mechanized corps went to the initial areas indicated by them for the offensive, having

suffered negligibly small losses from enemy air strikes. There could not be any "first

disarming strike", and in nature there was none. Having scribbled mountains of paper about what was not and could not be, the Soviet "historians" exhausted another mountain of paper to deny what actually happened. We are talking about such an important component of preparation for war

In each book, without exception, it was said that "history has given us little time", that our army could be "fully ready for war no earlier than 1942", and before that we had to put off with all their might, to put off, and to put off a military clash with Germany...

What to put off? Where? For

what? What is "full readiness for war", the author can not even imagine. And even more so, he is not able to understand how many years or centuries it takes to achieve this mysterious state of "full readiness". Mobilization is quite another matter. This is a list of absolutely specific measures that the officials named by name were to carry out within the time limits established with an accuracy of days and hours. Refraining from further amateurish explanations, we will immediately quote from the monograph of General Vladimirsky - in those days the deputy chief of the operational department of the headquarters of the 5th Army, who knew almost everything about mobilization measures on duty (the key words are underlined by the author): "... Mobilization plans in all rifle formations and units were worked out. They were systematically checked

by higher headquarters, refined and corrected. Registration to formations and units of personnel, mechanized transport, horses, convoy and clothing property at the expense of the resources of the national economy was

basically finished...

Divisions were fully provided with small arms, with the exception of some of its types (PPD assault rifles, heavy machine guns), .. Artillery rifle divisions were provided

basically completely, with the exception of 37-mm anti-aircraft guns, the shortage of which was 50 percent. The staffing of corps artillery regiments with materiel was 82 percent ...

The supply of mechanized transport rifle divisions was 40-50 percent. It was planned to replenish the missing cars and tractors with the resources of the national economy of the eastern regions of Ukraine ...



From May 20, 1941, for the purpose of retraining, all the privates and sergeants of the reserve were involved in 45-day training camps with rifle divisions. This made it possible to bring the number of personnel of each rifle division up to 12-12.5 thousand people, or up to 85-90 percent of the wartime staff ... "Do you

remember, dear reader, how many thousands of times we were lied to about the fact that "divisions The Red Army was kept according to the states of peacetime and by June 22 they were half the size of the German ones"? Do you remember how our great Marshal of Victory reflected in his memoirs that "on the eve of the war in the border districts, 19 divisions were equipped with 5-6 thousand people each, and 144 divisions had a strength of

8-9 thousand people"? In fact, according to the monograph "1941 - Lessons and Conclusions", in 103 rifle divisions of the border districts the number of personnel was increased: "21

divisions - up to 14 thousand people, 72 divisions - up to 12 thousand people. people and 6 rifle divisions - up to 11 thousand people" [3, p.

82]. Let us return, however, to Vladimirov's book: "... The order of mobilization provided for by the mobilization plans of the units basically boiled down to the following. Each part was divided into two mobilization echelons. The first mobilization echelon included 80-85 percent of the personnel of the unit ... The deadline for the readiness of the first echelon to set out on a campaign to complete a combat mission **was set at 6 hours.**

The second mobilization echelon of the unit included 15-20 percent of the personnel, as well as the entire reserve staff that arrived on mobilization. The deadline for readiness for the second echelon of units ... was set: for formations stationed in the border zone, as well as for the air defense and air force forces - **no later than the first day of mobilization**, and for all other formations - **in a day** ... All formations and

units were installed sheltered from air observation of the areas of mobilization outside their points of deployment, as well as the procedure for the exit of units into these areas and covering them during mobilization was determined.

According to the conclusion of the commissions of the headquarters of the army and the district, which checked the state of mobilization readiness of rifle formations and units in May-June 1941, all rifle divisions and corps units **were recognized as ready for mobilization on time ...** " [92] Now let's take a breath and

think about read. The traditional version was that the Red

Army needed at least another year to prepare for war. The Germans did not wait like knights and attacked the "unprepared for war" army. In a slightly more refined version, this bullshit sounded like this: it took another two or three weeks

to complete the mobilization measures, but the Wehrmacht's rapid advance into the interior of the country made mobilization impossible. Which is what caused...

But in fact, the covert mobilization was almost COMPLETE. Rifle divisions (that is, the main backbone of the army of that era and, we note, the main force in defense!) Almost completed their mobilization, and the planned terms of their readiness for combat operations were calculated not even in days, but in HOURS. A small "appendage" (the second mobilization echelon) could be brought to full readiness in just one or two days. How could a "surprise attack" by the Germans deprive the Red Army of these few hours? Was the USSR similar in size to Luxembourg or Denmark, which the Wehrmacht occupied in one day? It is also important to note that on the eve of the war, our command had no doubts about the reality of the indicated terms for resupplying and bringing units to full combat readiness. The main types of small arms and artillery weapons (see above) were already in

parts.

And the "40-50% of the regular number of mechanized transport" mentioned by Vladimirsky, translated into a more specific language, amount to 250 vehicles of all types and fifty tractors in one rifle (i.e. infantry!) Division. The fact is that the "staff numbers" themselves, provided for by Stalin's plans for preparing for the Great War, were huge. So, in the howitzer regiment of the rifle division of the Red Army, it was planned to have two tractors (powerful diesel "Comintern" and "Voroshilovets") for one howitzer (!), 37 radio stations (including two

long range on the chassis of a special vehicle), 90 trucks and 3 cars. In a separate anti-tank division of the same rifle division, 18 "forty-five" had 24 vehicles and 21 tractors. Moreover, the armored caterpillar Komsomolets was used as a tractor - created on the basis of components and assemblies of the T-38 light tank, armed with a machine gun in a ball mount and generally corresponding in terms of combat capabilities to the German PZ-I tankette, which all Soviet historians invariably included in the category "tanks." By July 1941, 7,780 such Komsomol members were issued and transferred to the troops [148]. Things were much worse with the

mobilization readiness of the mechanized corps. It is understandable. Firstly, by definition, the mechanized corps requires a huge number of "mechanisms", including cars and tractors (caterpillar tractors), a significant part of which, according to the plan, was supposed to work in the national economy until the day the open mobilization was announced. Secondly, Stalin's megalomania, as a result of which 29 mechanized corps, each with a thousand tanks, were simultaneously formed, exceeded the real possibilities of the country's economy. Having admitted all

this, we will not rush to conclusions again, but rather let's start studying specific facts, taken from the same monograph by Vladimirsky: "The 22nd, 9th and 19th

mechanized corps were formed from April 1941 on the basis of former tank brigades and by the beginning of the war were still in the stage of organization ... With a relatively large number of personnel (tank division - 9 thousand people, or 80 percent, motorized division - 10.2 thousand people, or 90 percent of wartime states), mechanized formations had a shortage of commanding officers and non-commissioned officers (40-50 percent) ... The situation was especially unfavorable with the staffing of units by commanders of tanks and tank units, as well as driver-mechanics and other specialists ... "True, one should not forget about **what corps** writes Vladimirsky. According to the pre-war plans

of the command of the Soviet armored forces, the 19th MK was not even among the nineteen "combat mechanized corps" and was formed according to reduced staffing, and the 22nd

th MK and 9th MK were to complete the formation only in 1942. The understaffing of these mechanized corps with tankers was completely "balanced" by the lack of a regular number of tanks in them. So, in the 22nd MK there were 712 tanks (69%), in the 9th MK - 316 tanks (31%), in the 19th MK - 453 tanks

(44%). In addition, everything is known in comparison. The Wehrmacht, whose numbers began to be feverishly increased from the autumn of 1940,

experienced the same problems: "... in tank and motorized divisions, regular officers made up 50% of the command staff, in infantry divisions - from 35 to 10%. The rest were reservists, whose professional training was much lower..." [VIZh, 1989, No. 5, p. 72. Only in the writings of Soviet propagandists did the notorious "two-year experience of waging a modern war" exist. Of the five tank divisions of the 1st tank group of the Wehrmacht, not a single one participated in the Polish campaign, only two (9th and 11th divisions) took part in the invasion of France, the 14th division managed to fight one week before the "Barbarossa" Yugoslavia, the 13th and 16th TDs (created in October 1940 on the basis of infantry divisions) did not take any part in the

hostilities until June 22, 1941. Now let us turn again to Vladimirsky's book in order to find out how was the situation with the equipment and weapons of the motorized troops:

"The tank and motorized divisions, except for rifles and carbines, were not fully provided with small arms: light machine guns - by 50 percent, machine guns - up to 40 percent (true to the traditions of Soviet historical science, the honored general did not dare to write directly that the main types of **small** arms - rifles and carbines - the troops were fully provided. - M.S).

Artillery materiel tank and motorized divisions were provided with:

76-mm guns - by 70%), 122-mm howitzers - an average of 87%, 152-mm howitzers - from 33 to 66%, 37-mm anti-aircraft guns - from 33 to 50 percent.

Mechanized transport tank and motorized divisions were also understaffed. There were 22-38 percent of motor vehicles, 20-40 percent of tractors. The howitzer regiments lacked artillery tractors, which reduced their maneuverability ... "

In concrete terms, it looked like this. In the 22nd MK, out of the 5165 vehicles laid down in the state, there were 1382 (27% of the staff), tractors - 129 pieces (37%). In total, 927 cars and 67 tractors were in the 19th MK, in the 9th MK - 1027 cars and 114 tractors [8]. The situation in the shock 4th MK, 8th MK and 15th MK, which began to form much earlier, was much better. In particular, the divisions of the 15th MK before the war were staffed with 94-100% rank and file, 45-75% junior

command personnel, 50-87% senior commanders, and the shortage of command personnel was mainly due to a lack of political workers and administrative staff. economic personnel.

The 8th MK, even before the call-up of assigned staff under the guise of "big training camps" in June 1941, was staffed by 89%, its artillery regiments were armed with 88 guns and howitzers (88% of the regular strength), anti-tank 45- mm guns were even more than the "norm" (49 instead of 36). There were 3237 cars and 359 tractors in the corps (7 units more than the norm!) [1, 8, 113].

And yet, problems with mechanized traction were ubiquitous. Even in the most prepared 10th Panzer Division of the 15th MK, there were only 64 tankers (out of 139 laid down in the state), 800 trucks (out of 918 laid down in the state), and most of them were GAZ-AA lorries, because for the low carrying capacity of which the division left 450 tons of various property at the place of pre-war deployment. And this is one of the oldest tank divisions in the area. In other divisions and regiments (especially motorized rifle regiments), the problem of motor transport was even more acute. So, in the 32nd TD of the "exemplary" 4th mechanized corps there were only 417

vehicles of all types, the 212th motorized division (15th MK), "having almost complete security with the personnel of the Red Army, did not have any vehicles for transporting personnel and could not provide itself with the supply of ammunition, food and fuel ... "The artillery regiment of the 37th TD (15 MK) was armed with 16 howitzers of 122-mm and 152-mm caliber and only 5 tractors for their transportation.

And they weighed 2.5 and 4 tons, respectively, and you can't roll them on your hands across the field. A motorized rifle regiment in the same 37th TD "was

completely unmanned with vehicles, stationed 150 km from the division, so he could not act together with the division at the beginning of hostilities. In assessing these

(as well as any other) facts, it is necessary to take a balanced approach and not rush to conclusions. One can hardly agree with those authors who state that "the so-called mechanized corps were ordinary infantry with tank reinforcements." Even the mechanized corps of the second echelon (9th MK and 19th MK) had a thousand vehicles each. Can this be called "ordinary infantry"? Was the position of the howitzer regiment of the aforementioned 37th Panzer Division so

hopeless? The division had 239 BT tanks and 32 T-34s in good condition. Each of these tanks could be used as a caterpillar tractor, and the tractor was much more powerful and fast than the tractors of that time.

Nevertheless, without the mobilization of vehicles from the national economy and bringing the staffing to standard standards, the combat effectiveness of the mechanized corps, of course, decreased. The unified military mechanism broke up into elements that were ineffective individually: infantry without tanks and tanks without infantry capable of consolidating their success.

The same situation - both tragic and absurd - developed in some artillery units. Before the war, divisional and corps howitzer artillery regiments were transferred from horse-drawn to mechanical (tractor) traction. All anti-tank artillery brigades should have been fully mechanized ("... not a single horse, only motors ..." - Moskalenko writes in his memoirs). It would seem - a huge advantage over the Wehrmacht, which went on the Eastern campaign with a huge herd of 750 thousand horses.

But when the war began, the German horses were in kind, but something incomprehensible began to happen to the tractors and cars assigned to the Red Army. On the one hand, there were

very, very many of them. Already in February 1941, the Red Army had 34 thousand tractors (caterpillar tractors). As well as 214 thousand cars and 11,454 motorcycles. On June 23, 1941, mobilization began, and there was even more equipment. The monograph "1941 - Lessons and Conclusions" provides the following data:

"... by July 1, the resources planned for mobilization were basically received ... 234 thousand cars and over 31.5 thousand tractors were delivered from the national economy ... cars - 82%, caterpillar tractors - 80% of their needs according to the mobilization plan ... "And now let's translate these" percentages from the mobplan "into something more

understandable and tangible.

According to the state, 352 tractors were required to fully staff the mechanized corps. This means that in order to equip all twenty mechanized corps deployed in the western districts, they had to transfer only 7,000 tractors. In addition, a number of corps that were just beginning to form (the 17th and 20th on the Western Front, the 9th and 24th on the South-Western) simply did not need three hundred tractors - there was still nothing to pull. Another primary recipient of the mechanized

thrust is the anti-tank artillery brigades (PTAB) of the reserve of the High Command. There were exactly ten of them in the entire Red Army. According to the state, each of them was supposed to have 120 anti-tank guns of various calibers. Total - 1200 tractors to fully equip all ten PTABs with mechanized traction. And this figure is greatly overestimated - many brigades were just beginning their formation and therefore in June 1941 they did not yet have all the guns they were supposed to have. And finally, the main worker of the war is the infantry. Each of the 155 rifle divisions

deployed in the European part of the USSR (including divisions located in the deepest rear, beyond the Volga or in the Arkhangelsk district) had a howitzer artillery regiment, in which the state was supposed to have 36 howitzers of 122- and 152-mm caliber and 72 tractors for their transportation. This is another 11,160 tractors.

Thus, the army's priority needs for tractors / tractors were expressed in the figure  $7000 + 1200 + 11,160 = 19,360$  units. Moreover, according to very "fat" standards, which in most cases require a double reserve of equipment. Even before the start of open mobilization, the army already formally had one and a half times more tractors. The tractors mobilized during the first week of the war doubled the total fleet. And at the same time, even in divisions

the first strategic echelon lacked the means of mechanized artillery! This is the famous "Stalin order"?

An equally "rosy" picture is emerging with the provision of the army with cars. By the beginning of the war, there were more than three hundred divisions in the entire Red Army (it is impossible to give an exact figure, since the size of the army grew rapidly, like bamboo). As of June 22, 1941, there were already 273,000 vehicles of all types in the army [3, p. 363]. By July 1 (see above), another 234 thousand were delivered to the army from the national economy.

Total: 1700 vehicles per division! It is worth noting the fact that in the "fully mechanized", according to Soviet propagandists, the Wehrmacht had exactly the same (500 thousand) number of wheeled vehicles, and on our roads by the end of 1941, 106 thousand vehicles fell into complete disrepair [11]. This is where we should rejoice at the enormous

achievements of Stalin's industrialization, but there is really nothing to rejoice at. We open the reports of the commanders of the Soviet corps and divisions and in almost every one we read: "The material part provided for by the mobplan did not arrive on mobilization." Like this? And where then did these same "234 thousand cars and over 31.5 thousand tractors" arrive !!!

Rokossovsky (in those days - commander of the 9th MK) writes that the personnel of motorized rifle regiments and divisions of the corps, who found themselves at the beginning of the war without horses and without cars, had to literally carry mortars, light and heavy machine guns on their shoulders, ammunition, as a result of which "it was completely exhausted and lost all combat effectiveness." How did it happen that the divisions of the mechanized corps did not get either 1700 or even 170 vehicles?

And here is the report of the commander of the 10th TD (15th MK): "... according to the mobilization plan, assigned vehicles from the national economy should have arrived by the end of M-2 (i.e., the second day of mobilization. - M.S): "GAZ-AA" - 188 and "ZIS-5" - 194. The division did not receive a single car from this number either in M-2, or on any of the following

days ... "" From the commander of the 2nd PTAB, Colonel M. AND. Nedelin received a report that he had not yet received a tractor from the national economy



only one division can move to the border" - these are the lines from Bagramyan's memoirs [PO].

No, it is no coincidence that Nedelin was later to become the commander of the Strategic Missile Forces of the USSR: he was still able, even in this environment of general chaos, to withdraw an entire artillery battalion (12 anti-tank guns). But the 5th PTAB, as Vladimirsky writes, even by June 29 (on the seventh day of the war!) "due to the lack of mechanized traction, it remained in Novograd-Volynsky" (250 km east of the border. - M.S). Exactly the same situation has developed with all the other PTABs, on all fronts. Not a single brigade - except for the 1st PTAB Moskalenko -

did not fulfill its task in the fight against enemy tanks, and all Soviet historians unanimously name the same reason in all their books - the lack of mechanized traction. How is that? Where did all the equipment go - both the one that was already in units on June 22, and the one that was mobilized in the first days? All this, some reader will say, are separate private shortcomings. If you please, here is a generalized picture for you: "... the delivery of mobilization was extremely poor

mechanized transport...

Thousands of cars and tractors in need of repair accumulated at the delivery points. There were cases when cars arrived at the delivery points of military registration and enlistment offices without fuel or, due to the lack of it, did not arrive at the farms at all ... So, from the Moscow Military District (that is, from the central, capital district. - M.S.) managed to send cars on their own, on the third day of mobilization only a quarter of the cars were sent ... often, due to great haste, road transport was loaded into trains and sent to the front without drivers and fuel ... 1320 trains (50,347 wagons) with cars were idle on the railroads..." [3] The rush was indeed very great. On July 6, 1941, Comrade Tutushkin, deputy head of the 3rd Directorate (counterintelligence) of the People's Commissariat of Defense, reported to Comrade Stalin: their location ... the echelon with the headquarters of the 19th army and the control of the 25th rifle corps instead of st. Rudnya (between Vitebsk and Smolensk.

- M.S) was sent to st. Gomel. The culprits remained

unpunished...

... On June 26, two echelons of tanks from the Kirov Plant (the latest heavy KV. - M.S.) were distilled for several days in the triangle Vitebsk - Orsha - Smolensk ... where these transports are currently located, the department has no information ... On June 27, 47 echelons with

motorized transport destined for the South-Western Front, which the front badly needed, were unloaded at st. Poltava, Kharkov (that is, hundreds of kilometers from their destination. - M.S.) ... 100 thousand mines sent to the South-Western Front

did not arrive at their destination, and where these echelons are located, management does not know..." [112, p. 199] Comrade Tutushkin says nothing about the causes of

such a "Brownian motion". General Vladimirovsky names some

of them:

"... On the evening of June 26, the Military Council of the 5th Army heard a report from the head of the organizational unit department, Colonel Shcherbakov, and the deputy chief of staff of the army for rear, Colonel Fedorchenko, on the progress of mobilization of troops and rear services of the 5th Army. It was found that the mobilization of the troops and rear of the army, which, according to the mob plan, should have been completed at 24:00 on June 25, that is, on the third day of mobilization (announced from 00:00 on June 23), was actually

disrupted ... western regions of Ukraine - either did not have time to appear in the unit, or evaded the turnout for mobilization. Only the formations of the 15th Rifle Corps, in front of which the enemy's offensive was slow, managed to partially replenish the troops with rank and file and horses from the areas closest to them ... " Vladimirovsky explains such an unexpected and discouraging result "by the

psychological impact of a sudden enemy attack on the mood of the local population, the rapid movement of the front line to the east and the subversive activities of enemy agents (i.e. Bandera. - M.S.) on our territory.

But that's not all:

"... the command and technical staff of the reserve, the mechanized transport and the driver's staff, assigned from the eastern (!!! - M.S.) regions, also did not arrive in the army ...". Vladimirov no longer comments on this information in any way ...

Let us emphasize the main thing again. The Red Army was by no means unarmed. In the course of covert pre-war mobilization, it has already received a huge number of people, guns, tanks and tractors, much more than the enemy. The failure of the planned resupply weakened its combat capabilities, but by no means reduced them to zero. And

yet the first toll of the funeral bell has already sounded. The vaunted Stalinist "order" in the very first hours of meeting with a real, armed enemy turned into unprecedented chaos, chaos and anarchy. The theoretically solid army mechanism began to crumble into separate "gears" before the first shots were fired.

#### **military council**

Now, having finished with all the necessary explanations, digressions, references, let's move on to the simplest - to a description of the hostilities. As noted

above, Directive No. 3 differed markedly from the pre-war plans of the Southwestern Front. On the one hand, the volume of assigned tasks was reduced - of the two operational directions (to Lublin and Krakow), only one remained. On the other hand, interaction with the left flank of the Western Front (namely, this idea of bilateral coverage of the Lublin grouping of Germans by the adjacent flanks of the Southwestern and Western Fronts was invariably present in all pre-war plans) could no longer be counted on. Directive No. 3 set before the troops of the left flank of the Western Front only a defensive task - "to deter the enemy in the Warsaw direction." In fact, the 4th Army of the Western Front in the Brest-Kobrin region

was literally swept away by the most powerful 2nd Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht, began a disorderly retreat, and about its participation in some kind of offensive operations together with the 5th Army of the South-Western

front was out of the question. Consequently, the second, northern tip of the “tank pincers”, which were supposed to close in the Lublin region behind the back of the enemy group advancing on Lutsk-Brody, had to be created on the move, from the very limited forces that the 5th Army had at its disposal. But by the night

of June 22-23 (when, as follows from the memoirs of Marshal Baghramyan, Directive No. 3 was received and deciphered), the situation on the front of the 5th Army worsened

significantly. The German command, resolutely massaging forces in the direction of the main attack, concentrated seven infantry divisions on the 70-kilometer section of the border from Ustilug to Krystynopol (now Chervonograd). All bridges across the border Bug, guarded by the NKVD troops, were captured by the Germans safe and sound. The report of the headquarters of the 1st TGr

of the Wehrmacht noted: “... the most important bridge near Sokal was captured intact. Crossing over the river Bug passed quietly. The infantry climbed to the heights east of the Bug without encountering any resistance...” [40, p.

227] By the evening of June 22, the German infantry, having crossed the Bug, pushed back from the border and partially surrounded two rifle divisions of the 5th Army. Two tank divisions crossed over to the captured bridgehead, which went on the offensive: the 14th tank division

to Lutsk, the 11th tank division to Radekhov. The heroic struggle of several garrisons of the Vladimir-Volynsky and Strumilovsky fortified areas (according to the stories of local residents, some pillboxes fired until the end of June!) Could not, unfortunately, change

the overall operational situation. The only strike formation that the command of the 5th Army had in this area was the 41st Panzer Division from the 22nd MK. In terms of the number of tanks (425 units, according to Vladimirsky), the 41st Panzer Division outnumbered both German tank divisions combined. True, with the exception of 31 K.V-2 super-heavy tanks, these were obsolete T-26s, undoubtedly inferior to the German PZ-III / 50, fifty of which were in each of the divisions of

the Kleist tank group. However, all these comparisons remained pure theory. The commander of the 41st TD, having opened the “red package” on the morning of June 22, 1941, found there an order for redeployment t

north, to the Lyuboml-Kovel region. The order was carried out, as a result of which the 41st TD literally "opened its doors" to the 14th Wehrmacht Panzer Division advancing on Vladimir-Volynsky. (Let's note in parentheses that the "red package" quite definitely brought the 41st TD to the starting area for an attack on Lublin, which can serve as another confirmation that such an offensive was being prepared long before the start of the war.)

It would seem that in the current situation, the command of the 5th Army had two options for using the 41st TD: it could be thrown on the offensive against Lublin (in accordance with Directive No. 3), and it could be returned back and used for a counterattack on the flank of the advancing along the Ustilug-Lutsk highway of the main enemy grouping. But neither was implemented. Strange as it may seem,

our reconnaissance aircraft interfered, and V. Suvorov lamented so much about the "destruction" of which in the first hours of the war. No, she flew,

reconnoitered, there were a lot of her (315th and 316th reconnaissance aviation regiments, 62 serviceable aircraft, including 38 of the latest Yak-4 high-speed reconnaissance aircraft), and she reported to the headquarters of the 5th army and the front that from Brest to Kovel, through the forests and swamps of Polissya, countless enemy hordes are moving. As Bagramyan writes [110], the composition of this grouping, which did not exist in nature, was then estimated at two thousand tanks (and this despite the fact that not a single Wehrmacht tank group

actually had even one thousand tanks). Unfortunately, the reconnaissance of the 5th Army for at least three days was unable to clarify the situation - i.e. get on a motorcycle and drive 130 km along the highway from Kovel to the suburbs of Brest in two hours (Brest itself, captured by the Germans on the very first day of the war, should not have been called in). All this led to the fact that not only the 41st TD, but also another division of the 22nd MK (215th motorized division) went along the route Rivne -

Lutsk - Kovel to the forests of Polissya, towards the enemy's mythical tanks. And so it happened that on the way of the 14th Wehrmacht TD advancing along the highway to Lutsk, there was only the 1st anti-tank artillery brigade under the command of K.S. Moskalenko. She saved the day. Despite the fact that the 1st PTAB entered the battle in the most "hazing order" -

at random firing positions - the courage of the soldiers and commanders, the excellent training and preparation of artillery crews, the military talent of the brigade commander turned out to be stronger than enemy tanks. The German commanders' lack of experience in tank combat also had an effect - the 14th TD was formed in October 40 on the basis of the 4th Infantry Division, and its "track record" included only the inglorious invasion of Yugoslavia in April 1941. due

to the heroism of the soldiers, we note, for the sake of truth, and the quality of Soviet weapons. The most powerful guns (anti-tank 76-mm and 85-mm anti-aircraft guns), which the brigade was equipped with, pierced through German tanks, and turrets were torn off light PZ-IIs.

The operational report of the 5th Army No. 9 contained a message that "in the period from June 23 to June 27, the 1st PTAB destroyed and knocked out about 150 enemy tanks" [75, p. 40]. This figure, of course, is exaggerated - in the entire 14th TD of the Wehrmacht there were only 147 tanks, and this division had yet to reach Stalingrad (where it was destroyed for the first and last time). But the fact that instead of a victorious march along the motorway to Lutsk, German tanks had to gnaw through the firing positions of the 1st PTAB for three days with heavy losses is beyond doubt.

Unfortunately, there was no other such brigade in the Radekhovsky direction (although there were four PTABs in the Yu-3. F.), and most importantly, there was no other such Moskalenko. By the end of the day on June 22, the German 11th Panzer Division advanced to the Radekhov area (35 km from the border).

To the south, in the strip from Rava-Ruska to Przemyśl (now this city is again in Poland, and on the map it is designated as Przemyśl), the German infantry tried with varying success to push back units of the 6th and 26th armies from the border. "In the remaining sectors of the 26th Army, the situation did not cause alarm," writes Bagramyan in his memoirs, "and it was quite calm in the band of the 12th Army, which took up defense in the

Carpathians and Bukovina." Such was the general situation on the Southwestern Front during those hours when, on the night of June 22-23, at the Yu-3 command post. f. Colonel General Mikhail Petrovich Kirponos (front commander), Lieutenant General Maksim Alekseevich Purkaev (front chief of staff), corps commissar gathered for a meeting in Ternopil

Nikolai Nikolaevich Vashugin (his position was called "member of the Military Council of the Front", but we will continue to call him simply and understandably - commissar), as well as General of the Army, Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army Georgy Konstantinovich Zhukov, who arrived as authorized representatives of the General Staff of the Red Army, and First Secretary of the Central Committee CP(b) of Ukraine, the future head of the nuclear superpower Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev.

This team had to make a historic decision. The huge forces assembled on the Southwestern Front, the exceptionally advantageous outline of the border (in which the Lvov grouping of Soviet troops hung over the deep rear of the enemy), the flanks of the front securely covered by the swamps of Polesie and the Carpathian Mountains - all this made it possible to set the task of encircling and completely defeating the enemy group armies of the South. And such a turn of events would have ruined the entire Blitzkrieg plan for the Germans, inevitably forced them to withdraw troops from the main operational direction Minsk-Smolensk-Moscow. In a word, history would change its course...

From the memoirs of Bagramyan, who was present at this meeting (at that time - the head of the operational department of the headquarters of the front), it is known that Purkaev and Vashugin expressed directly opposite opinions.

The chief of staff believed that it was necessary to withdraw the troops to the east, to the line of fortified areas beyond the old Soviet-Polish border, and only after that, having stabilized the defense front, go on the offensive.

The Commissar of the Front demanded to proceed immediately fulfillment of the directive of the Headquarters on the transition to the counteroffensive.

The author, sitting in an easy chair in front of a computer, does not consider himself entitled to argue about which of them was right. Moreover, both of them were right, and right in their own way.

The chief of staff, like no one else, understood that, according to pre-war plans, the front needed another three to four days to fully mobilize troops (i.e., call up assigned staff, mobilize vehicles from the national economy, deploy rear services). The enemy, on the other hand, will not wait, and his offensive may thwart organized mobilization—that is why it is better to withdraw yourself to a powerful defensive line prepared in advance and prepare behind it for a decisive counterattack.

The commissar knew better than anyone how many thousands of times the Red Army men were told that the Red Army would be "the most offensive of all armies," that the enemy would be smashed "in a foreign land," and so on. Withdrawal from the first days of the war, and even retreat to a depth of 200-250 km, could have the most negative impact on the morale of the troops - and this is no less dangerous than the lack of tractors and trucks. In addition, Purkaev's proposal had a very bad political connotation - a hasty withdrawal from the territories "liberated" in September 1939 would look like an indirect recognition of the illegality of their seizure. The commissioner could not allow such a thing. And in his own way he was, of course, right. The army is based on unity of command. That

is why there is a commander at the front, in order, having gathered together everything reasonable in the proposals of his subordinates, to take the only decision that is binding on everyone. And in the situation that developed on the Southwestern Front, it was not so difficult to combine the opposite. "Happiness is on the side of the big battalions," Napoleon used to say.

"The God of War does not like talented adventurers, he loves large armies," wrote the American military historian Taylor a century and a half later. And in this sense, Zhukov and Kirponos

incredibly lucky.

At the disposal of the Yu-3 command. f. there were enough forces to go over to a stubborn defense in the zone of the 5th army, and to deliver a crushing blow

forces of the "three heroes" (15th, 4th and 8th mechanized corps) in the direction of Lvov - Lublin, to the flank and rear of the entire advancing enemy grouping on the front Lutsk - Radekhov. There was a

map on the table in front of the generals. With the same outline of the "boundary of mutual state interests on the territory of the former Polish state", which on September 28, 1939, when signing the Treaty of Friendship and the Border with Nazi Germany, Stalin signed already in two places. And now, on the night of June 23, 1941, Zhukov had every reason to raise a faceted glass of tea for the wisdom and brilliant insight of Comrade Stalin.

Before firing a single shot, the mechanized corps of the Southwestern Front were already deploying in fact in the rear of the German troops, and their advanced units were already standing on



50-80 km west of the city of Zamostye, where the headquarters of German Army Group South.

The strike force of three mechanized corps (15th MK, 4th MK, 8th MK) consisted of more than two and a half thousand tanks, including 720 T-34 and KB tanks, invulnerable to 37-mm anti-tank guns German infantry divisions. By attacking the flank and rear of the main forces of Army Group South, deployed before the war in the Zamostye-Lublin region, the Soviet command from the very first days of the war could impose its will on the enemy, worked out plans, regroup troops, lose time and initiative. Least. As a maximum, it was possible force hastily change it to encircle and defeat the 6th German Army without waiting for this army to reach Stalingrad. For the attack on Lublin, the troops of the Kyiv OVO were preparing for at least six months. Routes, lines, possible enemy countermeasures - all this was studied and worked out by the command staff. Finally, such an offensive would also make absolutely pointless the breakthrough of the German tank divisions, which thus drove themselves into a deep and hopeless trap near Dubno-Rovno. On the other hand, regardless of the success (or failure) of the tank attack on Lublin at the Yu-3 command. f. there were every opportunity to stop the German advance on Lutsk-Rovno. In fact, in a matter of days, the density of the defense of the 5th Army could be increased many times over. Two rifle corps (31st and 36th) on June 18, 1941, according to the order approved by Zhukov himself, began to advance to the west. By the end of the day on June 23, these corps (six rifle divisions) were at a distance of 90-100 km, i.e. four diurnal transitions, from the Kovel-Lutsk-Dubno line [92].

Even earlier (by the morning of June 23), two divisions - the 135th rifle and 19th tank divisions from the 22nd MK - were supposed to go into the forests west of Lutsk. By June

24, those who started the march in the morning went to the line of the Styr River. On June 22, two mechanized corps of the front reserve: the 9th MK and the 19th MK.

Finally, having dealt with the mythical enemy grouping "advancing from Brest to Kovel", it was possible to return to active hostilities the two divisions of the 22nd MK, which had settled in the Kovel forests: the 41st tank and 215th motorized divisions. So seven

infantry (298, 44, 168, 299, 111, 75, 57th), two motorized (25th and 16th) and four tank (14th, 13th, 11th, 16th) divisions of the Wehrmacht, advancing in the strip Lutsk - Radekhov, the South-Western Front could oppose seven rifle, three motorized and six tank divisions - this is not counting those two rifle divisions (87th and 124th), which even before the start of the war occupied the defense zone from Ustilug to Sokal. In terms of the total number of tanks, the grouping of Soviet troops in the Rovno direction was 2.5 times superior to the enemy. Even taking into account the fact that three-quarters of these tanks were obsolete T-26s and T-38 tankettes, and the 9th and 19th mechanized corps were not mobilized and equipped with regular vehicles, the balance of forces of the parties, according to all the canons of military science, made it possible to prevent a stampede and begin a systematic withdrawal of the troops of the 5th Army

from line to line to the east. Nature itself took care of the creation of these defensive lines. From south to north, at almost equal intervals of 50-70 km, the zone of the alleged enemy offensive is crossed by the tributaries of the Pripyat: Turya, Stokhid, Styr, Goryn, Sluch. Vladimirsky in his monograph defines these rivers as "water barriers of operational and tactical significance.

They had a channel width - from 15 to 70 m, valleys - from 0.5 to 2 km, the banks of the rivers were swampy in places, the bottom was muddy. In short, the terrain is quite anti-tank. Especially if the four anti-tank brigades that the Southwestern Front had at its disposal were transferred to bridges and crossings.

At the same time, we emphasize once again that in the current situation, the troops of the 5th Army were not required to "stand to the death." It was necessary and sufficient to slow down the German offensive, to tie up his tank divisions in battle, preventing them from retreating back to Lublin. In itself, the organized and planned withdrawal of Soviet troops for 200-250 km from the border to the border of the Goryn or Sluch rivers did not conceal anything terrible. For France, a retreat of 200 km meant the fall of Paris; for Germany, a retreat of 150 km from the French border meant the loss of the entire Ruhr industrial region. And the Soviet Union had a completely different geography. Neither economically nor operationally